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Cover picture - One of six all-creations, "Fables Portfolio", 1976, by Jean Dubuffet, sold for £4,950 at Sotheby's on December 5.

From clerk into guru

Stefan Collini

D. P. CROOK
Benjamin Kidd: Portrait of a Social Darwinist
406pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.
0 521 25804 9

In 1893 Benjamin Kidd was a thirty-five-year-old lower-division clerk to the Inland Revenue Board. Like thousands of other Mr Pooters created by the late nineteenth-century growth of clerical employment, he commuted to central London from a rented suburban villa where he maintained his family on the respectable though constraining salary of £231 pa. Like who knows how many of his black-coated brethren, he nursed large literary and scientific ambitions. He was, typically, an avid naturalist, a scientific autodidact, and just a little bit of a crank. Like those thousands of lesser Darwinians who were inspired by the great man's modest methods, he compiled lovingly detailed botanical and zoological descriptions and engaged in homely experiments. Before he was married he kept colonies of bees, ants and wasps in his rooms. His first published literary efforts were popular nature essays, with such coy titles as "Concerning the Cuckoo" or "The Frog and his Relations" ("As a social animal the frog is a failure. In his morose and solitary disposition he bears about with him the visible signs of his inferiority.")

It was as exercises in applied Darwinism that these essays laid claim to the title of science. This was one of the favourite intellectual pastimes of the day: the facts could always be established by sufficiently diligent observation, and the ultimate explanation for their existence was given in advance by the theory of natural selection. The ingenuity lay in displaying in plausible detail how a particular and at first sight irrelevant characteristic might have been developed in the struggle for survival, an enquiry classically carried on in the back bedrooms of late-Victorian suburban semis, just as the game which it had dislodged - of explaining, in the style of natural theology, how these details exhibited the resourceful benevolence of the Creator - had classically been carried on in the studies of country rectories. Kidd, however, was not content with humbly helping to affix one or two pieces in the enormous jigsaw of nature; he always sought after the "secret key" to the cosmos, the principle or theory which would unlock the deeper coherence and meaning of both the social and the natural world. He was a variant on the contemporary Jekyll and Hyde theme: Pooter by day, Casaubon by night.

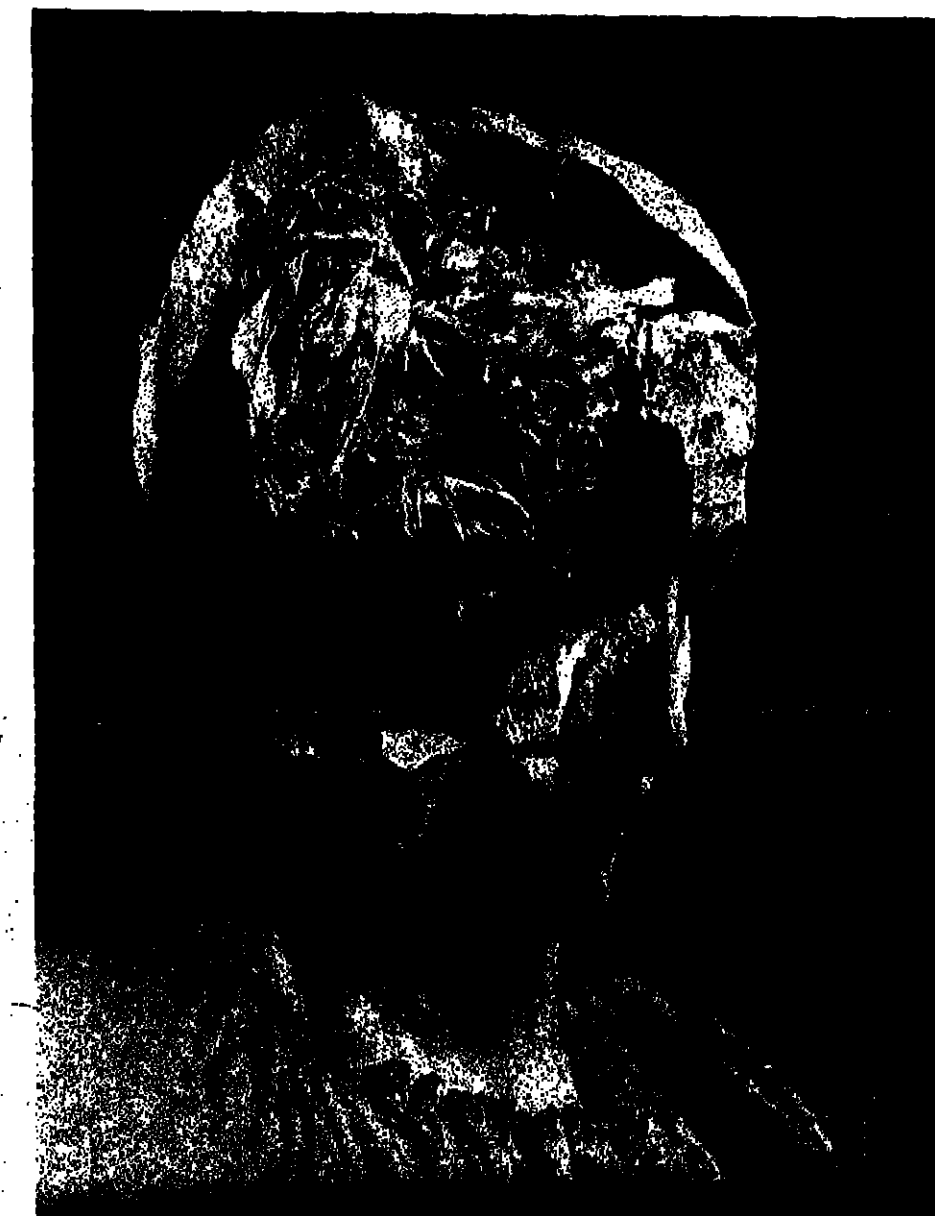
In this way he threaded together his own eclectic synthesis of several of the intellectual fashions of the age. He was, for example, an enthusiastic early follower of the German biologist August Weismann, whose theory of the successful transmission of the "germ plasm" as the regulatory goal of natural selection was intended to banish all vestiges of the Lamarckian doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Then, like Kropotkin and others in the 1890s, Kidd denied that this evolutionary mechanism favoured the selfish individual member of the species, at least where the higher species were concerned; evidence of "altruism" and co-operation among animals was much in vogue, and Kidd cleverly adapted these findings to argue that, despite the progressive role of competition in general, the survival value of group solidarity increased as one ascended the evolutionary scale. The fatally dangerous defect of pre-Darwinian social theory, he maintained, was its tendency to exalt individual rationality or selfishness - it was part of the potential strength, though ultimately a fundamental weakness, of his theory that he equated the two - at the expense of long-term group interests. But, fortunately for human progress, especially in its modern European embodiment, such individualism had generally been overborne by a much stronger force which reinforced solidarity and provided a non-rational selection for the evolutionarily necessary altruism, namely religion. The moral imperative to "live properly to the welfare of others" turned out to have impeccable scientific credentials. All this, and much more besides, was spelled out, with an impressively wide range of not very closely investigated historical examples, in a heavy manuscript which Kidd

finally completed in the summer of 1893.

He then took the shrewd step of showing this product of his leisure hours to his chief at the Inland Revenue, Alfred Milner, soon to achieve fame as an imperial proconsul. With Milner's help it was submitted to two publishers: Longman rejected it, on the basis of unfavourable readers' reports, as unlikely to prove a paying proposition; Macmillan accepted it, cautiously agreeing to print 1,500 copies and to give the author half of any profits that might accrue after all costs had been covered. The book, simply titled *Social Evolution*, was published early in 1894: it was an immediate best-seller, and Kidd's life was transformed. In the first eighteen months he netted the enormous sum of £2,400, ten times his annual salary. In four years the book sold a remarkable 200,000 copies (though the then common problem with pirated editions in the

caught the attention of an audience primed to feel concerned about the way "irrationalist" ideas had led Europe in Armageddon, and his reputation enjoyed a short Indian summer.

Thereafter, his name fell into oblivion for a couple of generations. In sociology, the intellectual enterprise that gave him star billing in his lifetime, he has sunk without trace: the historian of the subject who chose to set him alongside his exact contemporary Emile Durkheim, whether as a student of the social functions of religion or as a propagandist for socialism, would be criticized for perverse antiquarianism or sheer whimsicality. It is true that historians of Social Darwinism have never been able altogether to ignore his formidable contemporary reputation, and more recently historians of the politics, and particularly of the imperialist thinking, of the period have accorded him a respectful, puzzled mention.



Josef Sudek's gelatin silver print "Untitled", 1940, reproduced from Photography as Fine Art (214pp, with 183 plates, including 26 in full colour. Thames and Hudson. £9.95, 0 500 27300 6).

United States meant that the author was denied his full royalties).

Kidd soon gave up his civil service job, living the last twenty years of his life (he died in 1916) on the royalties from his books, the dividends on the very lucrative investments he made with them, and the income from the journalism and other freelance commissions which his early success thereafter sent his way. He became something of a public figure, whose views on the social and intellectual developments of the day were solicited by editors alert to the value of an opinionated scientific sage, and whose authority was cited on both sides of the Atlantic on subjects as diverse as the proper form of imperial trusteeship or the nature of sociology. In fact - and this is again typical of that class of quirky pseudo-scientific social prophets who capture public attention with one inspired (theoretical) hybrid - Kidd was never able to repeat the success of *Social Evolution*, and the period leading up to the First World War saw a steady decline in his reputation. Ironically, he became increasingly alarmed at the possible imperial consequences of the Social Darwinism he was popularly identified with, diagnosing it in a late-middle-aged mood of cultural nostalgia as part of a wider revolt against the moral standards of nineteenth-century civilization. When his last book, *The Science of Power*, was published in 1918, it barely

But for the most part his life has remained as obscure as much of his prose.

This situation will now be amply remedied by D. P. Crook's very fully documented intellectual biography. Based on enterprising digging in the archives as well as a thorough survey of Kidd's journalism and occasional writings, it enlarges our understanding of his ideas without attempting to reflate his reputation or exaggerate his significance. Dr Crook seems admirably at ease in the political and intellectual milieu of turn-of-the-century Britain, adroitly placing Kidd's work in its very varied contexts with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of enlightenment. He judiciously corrects misinterpretations and over-simplifications by other historians (including myself) who unwisely sought to summarize Kidd's eclectic and shifting theories in a few neat phrases. The book is especially good, as only intellectual biography can be, at showing both the persistence of certain intellectual habits and views that were the deep expression of temperament and cultural formation, and the ways in which Kidd's arguments and aspirations shifted with shifting circumstances, including those of his own career and age.

Though Crook's account is restrained and fair-minded, resisting all temptations to mockery or jolliness, the portrait of Kidd that emerges remains rather unattractive. The

autodidact with a message for mankind can be a tiresome companion. Unshakeably convinced that he had something original and important to say, Kidd resented advice, neglect, disagreement and criticism in equal measure, betraying at times signs of a mild persecution complex. It is remarkable how writers who sell hundreds of thousands of copies of their books complain of indifference and worse should a busy editor express the slightest reservation about an ill-considered proposal for an article; Kidd was the sort of author who makes editors shrink from opening their mail. More generally, he had the self-made man's touchiness about his independence combined with the outsider's yearning for acceptance. He took umbrage like other men took snuff; he kept an extensive stable of very high horses.

Like so many critics of hedonism, he seems to have had an underdeveloped capacity for pleasure. "Cleanly habits and simple comfort" were his stated ideal, and, as this suggests, his asceticism yielded him some of the satisfactions of puritanism. He deplored the slightest hint of sexual scandal, and primly disapproved of the advocacy of freer relations between men and women. He seems to have been happily married in his way, though his way wouldn't be everybody's: Crook impressively reports that Kidd's wife "typed the manuscripts for his later works, for which he made her a gift of a large silver salver inscribed with affectionate thanks". At one point, Crook allows himself the rare speculation that Kidd "was, in Freudian terms, a classic 'anal-retentive' type", and goes on: "One might conjecture that Kidd's grandiloquent, imaginative and ill regulated speculations represented a reaction against, or a release from, the constrictions of the anal-retentive character." There may be something in this - it is the teasing and maddening feature of such characterology that there is always something in it - but it seems no less plausible, and perhaps more illuminating, to construe Kidd's schematic subsumption of all of human history under a few basic laws rather as a symptom of his excessive need for control than a release from it. The reductionist theorist is in flight from the sheer disorderly abundance and variety of reality. Notoriously, part of the wider appeal of such mono-causal theories of history lies in the reassurance they offer that there is a pattern in the carpet, that the forces at work are few and simple, that "complexity" is a dodge invented by pedants to hide their fear of commitment, and these responses all bespeak the presence of *l'esprit de système*. Nor is this incompatible with the ostensibly contrary satisfaction of surrendering one's will to the impersonally cosmic. Kidd clearly obtained a certain *frisson* from dwelling on the universality and irresistibility of the great biological forces underlying human history, as Crook rightly observes, but the tone suggests less that he joyously found in this an excuse for letting it all hang out and more that he was gratified to find that nature, too, was intolerant of uncertainty.

Kidd's theories receive an intelligent and not unsympathetic exposition in this book, but the result is to suggest that they do not, frankly, invite any very extended critical attention, and I do not imagine that philosophers and social theorists will feel compelled to consult the pages of *Social Evolution* or any of Kidd's other works. Crook's study does, however, help us to address several historical questions of considerable interest, even though they are not explicitly raised in this form. The first is about the structure of intellectual life in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain, and the availability of various roles within it; the second concerns what can be learned from Kidd's eminence about the understanding of sociology during this period; and the third deals with the nature and role, especially the political role, of that cluster of ideas conventionally labelled "Social Darwinism".

In both social and intellectual terms, Kidd was, initially, an outsider, outside those overlapping worlds of the well born and the well connected, the public-school and university-educated, the political, professional and academic classes. Earlier in the century, such a figure would probably have been provincial rather than metropolitan, a Radical rather than a Whig, a Dissenter rather than an Anglican. But these were no longer the straitened

politics in late-nineteenth-century Britain. In certain ways, the intellectual culture of 1900 was more homogeneous than that of, say, 1825: the revival of the public schools, the reform of the universities, the growth of the civil service, the changing role of church and land, and the more general incorporation of the sons of the commercial classes into the circles produced by these changes meant that there was now a high degree of overlap between the networks based on Oxford and Cambridge and the political, legal and literary worlds of London.

Certainly these changes did not all work in the same direction; the expansion of the universities set in train inevitable processes of specialization which had their own excluding and fissiparous tendencies, and that same process licensed certain groups as authorities in a given field of enquiry. In the middle of the century it did not greatly matter to Spencer or Buckle (Kidd's most obvious predecessors) how their ambitious and self-consciously scientific interpretations of history were received by those few clerical dons who might have dabbled in history in the interstices of lives essentially devoted to other pursuits. Kidd's works, by contrast, were reviewed in such recently established professional journals as the *English Historical Review* and *Mind*, and his anticipations of their judgments as much as the judgments themselves shaped his identity and characteristic tone of voice in oblique but important ways. He felt he needed to pitch his appeal explicitly to the non-specialist, at the same time preening himself on his modernity and freedom from a (prejudiced) academic narrowness and obscurantism. It mattered to him to see himself not as a popularizer but as an independent thinker, and if there was defensiveness as well as dismissiveness in his characterization of that authority of which he was independent, that was because it represented, among other things, officially validated standards of exact scholarship which he could not measure up to and only half didn't want to.

However, it would be far too simple – and perhaps too easy – to see Kidd as a favourite piece of "outsider" mythology – to think of Kidd as ostracized by some exclusive "establishment". Consider, for example, the ways in which the periodicals of general culture were open to him, not a negligible matter given their status and readership. Even before his *anibus mirabilis* he managed to place articles in *The Nineteenth Century* and the *Cornhill Magazine* among others, and after it his pieces appeared in *The Times* and other leading morning papers, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Westminster Gazette*, in the *National Review* and the *Fortnightly Review*, and so on. It is true that we can now see that the years of Kidd's fame roughly coincided with the beginning of the decline of the great nineteenth-century quarters and monoliths, partly perhaps as a result of the development of the specialized academic journals just mentioned, but their influence was still considerable. And far from editors snubbing Kidd or conspiring to ignore him, many of them eagerly solicited articles from him and paid well for them.

Or, again, consider his political contacts. His success brought him membership of those cross-party dining-clubs that sprang up around the turn of the century, where he rubbed shoulders with politicians, professors and pundits like himself; he corresponded with Joseph Chamberlain and advised him about the presentation of his tariff policies; add, a different but revealing kind of contact, he felt able to ask for Milner's help in 1908, having recently renewed contact with his former boss at the dinners of the Comptons Club. In getting two of his sons nominated to posts in the Bank of England, even the universities could not be said to have neglected him altogether: Cambridge asked his advice during one of its periodic rumormongers on the advisability of re-knowledgeing the existence of sociology, and Oxford invited him to deliver the prestigious Herbert Spencer lecture in 1908. Kidd's career, in fact, illustrates some old truths about the absorptive capacities of the English educated classes – he might have remained more of an outsider in Germany in this period, for example – and about the plurality of worlds that may be occupied by a too hasty description of "homogeneity". Kidd, it has to be said, was a willing recruit: the scientifically self-educated

son of an Irish policeman bought for his own sons the most traditional of classical educations at Tonbridge, after which the clever one went to Cambridge and the other two into the City. That outcome is only too familiar in modern English social history, but we should not forget the successful career that led up to it. Kidd was neither a hack nor a don; he made his living as a man of ideas.

What now seems one of the most remarkable features of Kidd's career is the way in which he was hailed as a master-theorist of sociology. "In the chronology of that science", declared an American reviewer of *Social Evolution*, "1894 will hereafter be known as the Year One, and Mr Kidd's book as Volume One in its bibliography." His name almost invariably stood alongside those of the home team, Ward, Giddings and Small, in the reading-lists of the new departments of sociology then being established in the rapidly expanding American universities. Admittedly, his reputation as a sociologist never quite touched these heights in Britain, where the subject had no academic recognition at this point anyway, but it was still considerable. He managed to persuade the editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that the Ninth Edition of 1902 should carry an entry on "Sociology", hitherto absent, and that he should be commissioned to write it. Kidd was not the clearest writer who ever spilled ink – not always a handicap for an author with a vague and portentous message – but there was no mistaking the importance he attached to sociology, whatever it was: "It is the meaning of the social process which is constructing the human mind. This is the most pregnant idea in Western thought at the present time, and it places sociology in its true place as the sovereign of all the sciences." Crook generously construes the first sentence as adumbrating a theory of "the primacy and autonomy of social reality", which would certainly help Kidd's candidature for the not terribly exclusive club of sociology's Founding Fathers; but that still leaves somewhat under-explained not only why so many of his contemporaries accepted the truth of Kidd's second sentence, but even more why they regarded him as the king-maker behind the new sovereign.

That eminence was, as I have already indicated, short-lived, though it turns out, interestingly, that it was Kidd who rejected sociology before sociology rejected him. He had been a founder-member of the Sociological Society, started in London in 1903, and played an active part in its early proceedings, but he did not really belong to any of the rival groups within the Society who were struggling to have their own theoretical preferences recognized as constitutive of the new discipline, and eventually he drifted away. In 1908, in attacking the flourishing craze for Eugenics, he could still call for an anti-individualistic "sociology" as the antidote (by which he meant his own theory of the biological role of "social efficiency"), but in the last few years he abandoned the term, no longer finding that it suggested an appropriate identity for his civilization-saving thoughts, and by 1914 he was openly scornful of current claims for its scientific status.

What this suggests is that the vogue for sociology in the 1890s and 1900s temporarily provided Kidd with a convenient label and an exploitable role. The title was, following Comte and Spencer, freely bestowed on attempts at a synthetic interpretation of the whole of human history, and in Britain at this time it was mandatory for such accounts to display their cognizance of the biological foundations of human social development. Kidd, unlike such immediate rivals as Hobhouse and Geddes, was not interested in sociology as a putative "discipline": he did not concern himself with the finer points of methodology, and it is not surprising that he founded no school and inspired no disciples. His had been a highly idiosyncratic vision of how history could be made to yield up its inner secrets, but it was not straining at the limits of the contemporary understanding of the term to present it as "sociology". When Abbot Small later sneered at "the sociological school represented by Benjamin Kidd, which the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* mistook for sociology", his only mistake was to suggest that this had been an eccentric identification. Certainly, the task of such academic critics of sociology as Henry Sidgwick was made easier

by the fact that Kidd's work was so widely taken as exemplifying the state of the art.

In turning to the third issue illuminated by this book, the nature and role of Social Darwinism, we again have to be attentive to the range of theories covered by a single term. There was, logically and actually, more than one way of connecting biological theories of evolution with their putative political applications, and Crook carefully distinguishes Kidd's version of that connection from several others with which it has been confused. What is often forgotten when social and political historians talk about "Social Darwinism" is how much of what they are referring to was in fact Lamarckian rather than Darwinian (as well as some theories of social development that rested on no distinctively biological mechanism at all). Indeed, it may be argued that there were few strictly Darwinian social theorists of any consequence before the last decade or two of the century.

Kidd proves bracingly difficult to classify here, too, because although it was part of his self-conscious up-to-dateness to be dismissive of all forms of Lamarckianism in the 1880s and 90s, in the 1900s he equally repudiated Eugenics, regarded by some scholars as the only logical outcome of consistent Darwinism. Moreover, he did not endorse unregulated commercial competition, something often casually assumed to be a constitutive element in any kind of Social Darwinism, and he set narrow limits upon the value of individualism in general. In the last few years of his life he even, as part of his more generally apprehensive mood, cast doubt on the whole business of attempting to "read off" political conclusions from evolutionary science. It is to Crook's credit that he explores these complications very fully and still leaves us feeling that his subtitle is well chosen.

The political bearing of Kidd's work also defies easy categorization. Admittedly, in being a critic of both laissez-faire and Socialism he was far from unique, and his lack of an unambivalent party-political identity may be taken as evidence of a wider political dislocation at this time. The first decade of the century saw much exploration of affinities of temperament and aspiration that cut across established party lines. A self-flattering sense of the need for wide-visioned policies: that were "scientific" and adapted to the "modern" world (the rhetoric may have seemed less stale then, or perhaps it always seems fresh to its users) could engender impatience with the obstructive orthodoxies of the Victorian party battle. It could unite Tories who were Tariff Reformers with Liberals who were Imperialists, and both with Fabians and Eugenists. The cross-party dining-clubs mentioned earlier were the tangible, if ultimately ineffectual, expression of this restlessness. (This was very much a fashion confined to a metropolitan elite: popular party allegiances, as usual, seem to have remained more stable.) Kidd was naturally drawn to these circles, where his credentials as a man of science were not scrutinized too closely, and where his meta-historical speculations found a favourable resonance among those on the lookout for justifications for the dangerously fascinating activity of mould-breaking. Too prickly to be a willing camp-follower, he none the less responded to the grandeur of Chamberlain's aims and the flattery of his attention, and was correspondingly exasperated at the triumph of what he regarded as the "stygian tribalism" which produced the Liberal landslide of 1906. This characterization gains added plausibility when we discover that Kidd had been asked to stand for two constituencies during the previous parliament – once by the Liberals and once by the Tories.

Social Darwinism was, of course, a European rather than a purely Anglo-American phenomenon, though with interesting national variations: for obvious reasons theories of ethnic conflict prospered in Austria-Hungary, for instance, and there may have been a touch of chauvinism in Lamarck's pronounced longevity in France. There are some particularly intriguing comparisons between the developments in Germany and those in Britain, though Crook does not pursue the international dimensions of his subject. Kidd had much in common, for example, with the best-selling contemporary in Germany, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. A similar mix of eclectic sci-

tific knowledge and breathtakingly ambitious historical speculation, the same deliberately cultivated distance from academic narrowness and caution. They could appeal to some of the same emotional needs and intellectual tastes, too. When Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* appeared in English translation in 1911, having sold 100,000 copies in German, George Bernard Shaw declared: "This very notable book should be read by all good Fabians: it is a masterpiece of really scientific history." Notoriously, Chamberlain's book was read by many who could hardly be described as "good Fabians": it became one of the acknowledged sources of Nazi race theory. This points to a very significant difference between the two authors, for, as Crook brings out very nicely, Kidd's was not in fact a theory of racial superiority at all. He always denied that any group owed its success to congenital physical or intellectual advantages, arguing instead for the determining role of social organization and moral ideals.

There may be an even more general point to be made here, in that the word "race" was freely used in the late nineteenth century without necessarily connoting any definite genetic stock: sometimes it just meant "nation" and occasionally something little short of "mankind". The long-standing tradition of analysing comparative historical outcomes in terms of "national character" could be given a scientific veneer by the language of late-nineteenth-century biology without always being converted into a strictly racial theory. Needless to say, both imperial ambitions and domestic social tensions could call out any implications about the competitive advantages of racial purity, though it is worth remembering that even Aryanism enjoyed a long and respectable life in scholarly investigations based on the Comparative Method rather than upon biological theory before it appeared on antisemitic posters in German streets. Certainly, in accounting for Kidd's success, as of that of several neo-Darwinian social evolutionists in whose company he belongs, we should do well not to concentrate, prepotentially, on the sinister uses of racial theorizing in the twentieth century, but rather to ponder the appeal of what Shaw had in mind in his reference to "really scientific history".

And a clerk in Croydon may be a sage in Shanghai. Kidd was translated into Chinese, and, according to Mao Zedong's biographer, he "possessed an incalculable influence" in that country. His work was eagerly taken up by Mao's mentor, Liang Chi-chao, and acclaimed as the pinnacle of Western thought. It seems that Marx's name was first mentioned in Chinese in 1902 in an essay by Liang on Kidd. In that essay, quoted by Crook, he praised Kidd's second book, *The Principles of Western Civilization*, in terms that would make even a hardened blurb-writer blush: it was "a book destined to influence all the minds of the world". The "great question of the world" was "what the evolution of man is going to be". Plausible answers were hard to come by, even among those not noted for their intellectual reticence: "Marx and Huxley can make difficulties for others; they are unable to solve the problem for men." But at last there had arisen a writer equal to the question: "Kidd stands out above all others and takes a step forward." In Liang's view, the step consisted above all in showing the "evolutionary imperative" of the subordination of the individual to the collective. "By virtue of death everyone can make himself profitable to his race, by virtue of death the existing race can make itself profitable to the future race. How great is the use of death!" Liang called this doctrine "Futurism" and passed the lesson on to Mao, who certainly seems to have taken it to heart. O Lord, what have you done?

My Dear One: A Victorian Courtship, edited by Patricia Casson, (159pp. Julia Martin, £8.95, 0 86203 185 0) contains papers discussed by Dame Sybil Thorndike. Most of the book consists of a series of letters (found together with faded pink ribbon) between her parents Agnes Bowers and Arthur Thorneycroft, covering the three-month period of their engagement in 1881 but some correspondence from early married life has also been preserved. The book also contains a brief biographical fragment written by Dame Sybil

Informers and disinformers

Nigel Clive

CHAPMAN PINCHER

Too Secret Too Long: The great betrayal of Britain's crucial secrets and cover-up 638pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £10.95. 0283991518

This long analysis of Soviet penetration of both the Security and the Secret Intelligence Services, with each chapter carefully footnoted to show the range of Chapman Pincher's high-level sources, claims to place on record a mass of new information about espionage and subversion, and to show "the appalling degree to which Parliament and the public have been misled about the secret services". The list of well- and lesser-known names and case histories, beginning with Fuchs and continuing with Pontecorvo, Nunn May, Philby, Maclean, Burgess, Blunt, Long, Cairncross, Vassall, Ellis and Blake, is brought up to date with the inclusion of Hambleton, Prime and Bettaney. Much is already known of the damage that this infamous list of names has caused both individually and collectively over time to the reputation of the secret services at home and abroad. But Pincher's main purpose in reconstructing an otherwise largely familiar story is to provide greater credibility than in his earlier book, *Their Trade is Treachery*, published in 1981, for the claim that Sir Roger Hollis, a former head of MI5 from 1956 to 1965, who died in 1973, was the best placed, longest lasting and most successful Soviet agent of them all.

Hollis's early career in China in the late 1920s and early 30s, as an employee of the British American Tobacco Company and as a journalist, is analysed to show that at that time his friends included such later well-known Communist and Comintern agents as Agnes Smedley, Arthur Ewert and Mrs Len Beurlton, née Ursula Kuczynski, a German Jewess of Polish origin, who was later to publish her memoirs under her code-name, Sonia. Pincher claims that conditions in Shanghai "could have" influenced Hollis in the same way as the Cambridge recruits had been influenced by Hitler's repression of the Jews; that Hollis "fits easily into the pattern of young people recruited for ideological reasons"; that in 1937, when Hollis was "believed to have been" in England, Sonia "might have recruited him". This so-called evidence, which would be laughed out of court in any judicial inquiry, becomes genuinely derisory when, in order to rebut the claim that no one who was keen to flaunt his Old Cliftonian tie (as Hollis did in Shanghai) could ever betray his country, Pincher shows that Burgess often wore his Old Etonian tie in Moscow and that Philby continued to follow the cricket scores and pined for Lords. Once Hollis has been convicted on circumstantial evidence and made to appear guilty by association, the story moves straight on within this groove. Sonia is presumed to have run Hollis while with much of MI5 he was evacuated to Blenheim in 1941. Hollis "best fit" the description of the Soviet agent Bill, identified by Gouzenko, the Soviet cypher clerk who defected in Canada in 1945. But as Philip Knightley showed in the *Sunday Times* on November 11, when Gouzenko was interviewed in 1981, he mixed up MI5 with Section 5 of MI6, which in the immediate post-war period handled counter-intelligence and was then run by Philby. The dangers of accepting everything a defector says will appear later.

Pincher's account of the Fluency Committee, which was set up in the mid-1960s as a joint effort by MI5 and MI6 to try to identify further Soviet agents in high places, and of the subsequent establishment of K7 within MI5 to analyse possible penetrations in both services and GCHQ, seems to have placed much faith in the evidence of three of the Committee's former members, Peter Wright, Arthur Martin and Stephen de Mowbray. These officers compiled a list of failed operations which they considered could only be explained by someone high up in MI5 having passed the right information at the right time to the KGB. Much against Hollis's wishes at the start, they succeeded in interrogating both his deputy, Graham Mitchell, and the Director of Protective Security, Michael Hanley, who was later to become Director General. In neither instance were any of the alleged operations discussed or even served. The book also contains a brief biographical fragment written by Dame Sybil

they able to obtain a confession of guilt: which is virtually the only way of proving that a person is a spy. Nor were they any more successful in making Hollis confess when he himself was brought back from retirement to be interrogated. Even after Lord Trend, a former Secretary of the Cabinet, had reviewed this investigation in 1975 and, much to de Mowbray's dissatisfaction, could find no evidence of a cover-up, the deepest suspicion if not certainty, of Hollis's guilt remained with them then and still remains. Indeed it is their crusade, doubtless inspired by a sincere belief that they are still acting in the public interest, which explains the main purpose of this book.

There are occasional false statements, such as the claim that the tunnel under the East-West boundary in Berlin, an Anglo-American operation (later blown by Blake) which successfully tapped Red Army cables and scrambled telephone conversations, "produced nothing but a mass of carefully prepared misinformation, interspersed with some occasionally accurate 'chickenfeed' to keep it going". But what is more surprising is the failure to follow through the performance of Anatoli Golitsyn, the KGB officer who defected to the CIA in December 1961 and established his credentials in London by giving the lead to Vassall. Thereafter, finding that he had an eager audience in certain quarters, both in London and in Washington, he imaginatively not only tried (and mercifully failed) to cast suspicion on the distinguished American diplomat Averell Harriman, but, as Pincher relates, began to "peddle the speculation" that the political split between Russia and China was part of a massive disinformation exercise. The reader is referred in a footnote to Golitsyn's book *News Lies For Old* (reviewed in the *TLS*, October 26). But he is not told either that Arthur Martin and Stephen de Mowbray sponsored this book, or of the other events which Golitsyn lists as disinformation. These include the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute of 1958-60, the de-Stalinization campaign, the Soviet-Albanian split and even the Prague spring under Dubček in 1968.

This rignarole continues with Sakharov filling the role of a senior disinformation spokesman for Soviet strategists and, after disowning the charge that the Bulgarian and Soviet services were implicated in the attempted assassination of the Pope, ends appropriately with the assertion that the Solidarity movement in Poland was prepared and controlled from the outset within the framework of Soviet bloc policy and strategy. In the foreword to this book, Arthur Martin and Stephen de Mowbray state that "despite the rejection of his [Golitsyn's] views by many of our former colleagues, we continue to believe that the contents of this book are of the greatest importance and relevance to a proper understanding of contemporary events". This reveals a good deal about the understanding of the wider political issues by at least two of the officers who persuaded themselves and others of Hollis's guilt.

A recurrent theme running through much of Pincher's analysis is "the potential value of oversight". It is indeed arguable that there is a need for some degree of Parliamentary check on intelligence and security operations; that the positive vetting system should be overhauled; that the hothouse atmosphere and inward-looking approach of many of those engaged in clandestine activities may well have contributed to some instances of professional incompetence; that outsiders in at least some of the top posts might bring a fresh look. These are the kind of matters that could profitably be examined by the existing Security Commission: which would be infinitely preferable to the proposals of those like Peter Wright who have pressed for a new body to investigate Soviet penetration of the security and intelligence service. On past form this could develop into a system whereby the person interrogated would be considered guilty until he could prove his innocence. In that event, who in his right mind would agree to serve in either MI5 or MI6?

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The very devil

Peter Hebblethwaite

PETER JENNINGS

An End to Terrorism 126pp. Tring: Lion. Paperback, £1.50. 0856486485

Now that Douglas Hurd is installed in Belfast he could do worse than include this unpretentious little book in his bedside reading. For it offers a way out of the impasse and – in the optimistic words of the title – an end to terrorism. How is this miracle to be achieved?

Peter Jennings, a Birmingham journalist, is a Roman Catholic with an Evangelical Anglican wife. They have been touched by the charismatic or Renewal movement, which works across denominational frontiers. At the centre of the story is Billy McIlwaine, a former Loyalist paramilitary, who discovered Jesus when he thought he was dying of the demon drink. He resolved to devote the rest of his life to building up good relations with "the enemy".

But it is not so easy to quit a paramilitary group. The "lads" will think you are about to betray them and knee-cap you *pour encourager les autres*. Being "converted to Christ" is about the only acceptable way out – and there are some charlatans. McIlwaine's conversion was serious, has proved its depth and stood the test of time. He has tried to get others on both sides of the conflict to abandon violence and try the way of peace. He has founded a group called Soldiers of the Cross to bring together disillusioned paramilitaries.

McIlwaine has written: "The enemy of Ireland is not the British Army, the RUC, the Orange Order, the IRA, INLA or the UVF. The enemy is Satan seeking to use every channel he can." Before dismissing that as simple-minded, consider what Aldous Huxley said in *The Devils of Loudun*. He noted that when people ceased to believe in a personal devil,

they transferred their feelings of hostility and aggression to their political opponents; so the enemy became someone not merely to be defeated but someone to be suppressed; modern war was born. If the role of Satan were recognized in Ulster, it would be possible perhaps to "de-diabolize" the other side. The one weakness of the book is that the only Catholic convert mentioned is a woman, one Mary Smyth. Evidently the IRA, both Provisional and Official, are resisting amazing grace with some resolution.

But can McIlwaine's group ever become a mass movement that would sweep through Ulster and the Republic? Stranger things have happened. Paradoxically, Jennings finds most hope in the most appalling outrage. On November 20, 1983, gunmen burst into the Mountain Lodge Pentecostal church near the border and sprayed the congregation with bullets. There were three deaths. McIlwaine was on the scene trying to comfort the bereaved that same night. *The Irish Times* referred to the IRA claim that it killed Protestants not because they were Protestants but because they were members of the security forces. The massacre at Mountain Lodge demonstrated that this was not so.

As Georges Bernanos said, hope is born on the other side of despair. Again, the *Irish Times* brought out the novelty of the situation: "The unusual aspect of the recent slaughter has been the devastating candour and forgiveness on the part of the Pentecostals. It has been startling, almost shocking, as such naked appeals to Christianity tend to be. No reproach; no hatred; indeed an appeal to the gunmen to come and be forgiven."

This is probably not something the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland can build a new policy on. But he should bear it in mind. The sum of goodness in Ulster far exceeds the sum of evil.

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The money-movers

Jeremy Hardie

PAUL FERRIS
Gentlemen of Fortune: The world's merchant and investment bankers
260pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0297 783807

With admirable flair and colourful detail, Paul Ferris describes the extraordinary institutions which have come to dominate banking and financial markets in the past ten years or so – not only in the United States, where the species shows its fullest development, but increasingly in London, encouraged by the Government, the Bank of England, and the trust-busting activities of the Office of Fair Trading. The scale of these activities, and of the resources needed to keep them going, would beggar the imagination of even the most far-seeing banker ten or fifteen years ago. The trading room of a big New York institution like Solomon Brothers has hundreds of expensive (typically young) traders, their rows of desks stretching out far into the distance – each with his, or her, VDU, massed telephones, fashionable clothes and smart chatter, waited on by boot-blacks and sandwich-vendors, all involved in a raucous hubbub of shrieked bid and counterbid. International markets run right round the clock, with Tokyo handing its book to London who hands it to New York in turn. The standard nine-to-five working day is spent entirely at the dealing desk, with no break for lunch and little variation in the monotony of instantaneous reaction to the deal of the second. Getting business depends a great deal on personal contact. This cannot be done during the day, when the conversation is limited to messages so brief and cryptic that they cannot be persuasive. After work, so-called entertainment takes over. What entertainment means depends on what your customer wants. I met a man in New York recently who had spent the previous evening drinking and dining, and then

went on to a disco with a client who liked that sort of thing. He got to bed, an hour or so out of the city, at 3 am. At 6 am, he was up again to play squash with a customer who preferred fitness to night-life. At 9 am, he was back in the office.

Ferris's reporting of the character and history of the main people and institutions is accurate, and excellently drawn; above all, he catches the enthusiasm, energy and glamour of the frenetic financial markets. It is not his business or inclination to speculate what all this activity is really for. It is a commonplace that modern economies are moving fast out of manufacturing into services, and that this move is a natural and desirable part of the process of development. However, for the United States and the United Kingdom in particular, the key feature of the change turns out to be a rapid increase in the provision of financial services – meaning everything from high-street insurance broking to the massive international operations described by Ferris. Is it really right that we should devote so many talented people, and pay them such huge amounts (in New York, \$150,000 is a typical income for a dealer in a recent year), solely to ensure that we have a Rolls-Royce system of financial markets? One justification which is often used is to say that provided this is the result of freely operating markets, it must reflect the choice of ultimate customers, and their needs. In this case, certainly, the markets look free enough, and they are comparatively easy to enter, compared with many modern technology-based industries. On the face of it they are highly competitive. So if we see hundreds upon hundreds of expensively dressed young men spending their days shouting exchange rates at each other, they can only be there because somebody freely chooses that they should do so, in order to satisfy some need.

Nevertheless, doubts remain. What is it that the ultimate customer, or the mediating business, needs that requires such a huge and rapid development of financial services? Every

undergraduate economic text-book tells you that lending, and hence borrowing, and hence investment is made a great deal easier if the saver can sell his stock or share on to somebody else quite quickly if he needs cash instead. Not many people would invest in industry if they had to tie up their money in perpetuity. So far so good. But does this perfectly natural desire for liquidity require such an army of intermediaries to make it good? And why is it that the demand has increased so spectacularly over the last twenty or thirty years? After all, Victorian industry prospered with much less agile stock-markets.

A possible alternative explanation is that financial markets have become a venue for gambling. Very many investors believe that the way they can make money is by guessing more quickly than their competitors which way the market is going. You then sell now to buy back more cheaply later – or vice versa. To do this successfully, there has to be a very efficient

market which will let you buy and sell financial assets in large quantities, at once. Otherwise, you cannot move quickly enough to take the opportunity. So investors are willing to pay large amounts of money for a system which provides them with such instant facilities. The activity is like gambling, not because it involves greed, or taking a risk, but because the game is zero-sum – that is, although each player thinks he can make money off the rest, in the aggregate all the players taken as a group cannot gain, since one man's profit is another's loss.

Even if this diagnosis is correct, it does not demolish the traditional free market/consumer sovereignty argument, whereby what free markets produce is usually, subject to qualifications, self-justifying. But it certainly casts a different light on the activities of these "gentlemen of fortune" if, instead of showing the way to the sunny uplands of the post-industrial society, they are simply servicing an increasing desire to gamble.

Through androgynous eyes

T. W. Hutchison

CHARLES H. HESSION
John Maynard Keynes: A personal biography of the man who revolutionized capitalism and the way we live
400pp. Collier Macmillan. £14.95.
0025513109

For some time a new biography of Keynes has been needed to supersede, or at least supplement, Roy Harrod's *Life*, which, a third of a century ago, was written too soon, in too fulsome a style, and under excessive restraints, partly self-imposed. For one thing, the economic history of the past decade or two has brought considerable changes in opinion (not as noticeable in British academia as elsewhere) regarding the economic theories and policies to the elaboration of which Keynes's life was primarily devoted. Second, it is now easier to discuss publicly aspects of Keynes's private life which Harrod felt he had to suppress; and on this subject there have now become available shelves-full of Bloomsbury diaries and letters, biographies and autobiographies, etc. etc. together with mountains of unpublished documentation. Anyhow, two new biographies have recently appeared, in such rapid succession that they make no reference to one another: the first, by Robert Skidelsky (see *TLS*, November 4, 1983), and the second by Charles H. Hession, bearing enthusiastic endorsements from Professors Kenneth Boulding and J. K. Galbraith.

Confidence in Mr Hession's work is mildly jolted, at the outset, by four or five misspellings of place-names on p. 2. For English readers a further surprise may be occasioned by the remark, à propos of the literary education imparted to her son Lytton by Lady Strachey, that "at an early age she introduced him to French letters". Reassurance may not be fostered by subsequent references to "Alfred" Pigou, Professor Edgeworth "of Cambridge", and to the "Etonian" C. R. Fay. These might be regarded as rather trivial blemishes. (What does it matter what Pigou's Christian name was? One can't imagine many people addressing him by it.) However, further misgivings, on behalf of academic readers, must be expressed regarding the Sources/Notes: page references are mostly not given; so that it is pretty difficult, and sometimes impossible, for an inquisitive reader to follow up quotations and citations.

What must be decisive, however, is the treatment of the big questions, and the balance of the book as a whole. In one sense, regarding the fantastic range of interests, activities and accomplishments packed into the sixty-two to three years of Keynes's life, this biography achieves an admirable balance and comprehensiveness. Regarding other kinds of balance, assessment is inevitably difficult and controversial. This "personal" biography makes much of Keynes's homosexuality, or androgyny, seeking to relate them closely, or significantly, to his main work and achievements. Such authorities as Freud and Fromm, Adler and Erikson, are called in to assist. The

cult of homosexuality in Victorian public schools is invoked, and the personalities of the parents are indicated. The relationship between androgyny and artistic creativity is briefly discussed. Though the upshot is not uninteresting, it all seems extremely tenuous, speculative – and perhaps more than slightly irrelevant. Admittedly, historians of economic thought, in their interpretations, or exegeses, have been inclined to give insufficient weight to biographical factors, for example with regard to Ricardo and his achievements. Certainly, also, Harrod's suppressions were seriously distorting. Here, however, it may seem that the "personal" aspect has been somewhat overworked – provided it is accepted that the centrepiece of Keynes's life and work lay in his achievements as an economic theorist and statesman.

One "personal" point which could have been followed up might be derived from Schumpeter's hint about Keynes's "childish vision". This may have impaired his discernment of, or interest in, the long-run dilemma looming up, since the turn of the century or before, for Britain's economy and its relative place in the world. This problem deeply worried Alfred Marshall in his later years, but then largely disappeared from Cambridge preoccupations. Admittedly, throughout the second half of his life, after 1914, Keynes's attention was inevitably engrossed by shorter-term dangers and crises. But the longer-run economic problem for Britain seems to have caused him extraordinarily little concern (though he showed, at times, that he had a rather surprising "Kipling" side).

Presumably the most important balance in a major "Life" of Keynes must turn on the exposition and judgments, explicit or implicit, regarding his economic theories and policy ideas, and of his work in the Treasury during the two world wars and their aftermaths. What is open to criticism, in this respect, is that Hession's account is almost uniformly approving throughout, and that comparatively little recognition is granted to the seriousness of the criticisms suggested, not only by subsequent history, but by economists back in the 1920s and 30s. Keynesians (though not themselves outstandingly inclined to such confessions) have been rather fond of citing Pigou's public recantation, in his old age, of some of his earlier and most sweeping criticisms of Keynes's *General Theory*. But there were other criticisms and qualifications, put forward by Pigou and others, and certainly unretracted, which deserve to be given more weight and attention.

In fact, Hession's stance and treatment may here be considered to approximate rather too closely to that of Harrod thirty-three years ago. The concluding "Afterword" on "The Transformation of Keynes's Vision since 1946" is too brief and ambiguous to restore the balance. Moreover, while suggesting that Keynes would want to distance himself from some of his "Keynesian" successors, Mr Hession is not sufficiently clear as to just which, and how many, of them would be rejected. In these transformed times they might, perhaps, number many more than he, or other Keynesians, seem prepared to envisage.

Knowing and loving

Valentine Cunningham

GEOFFREY GRIGSON
Recollections: Mainly of artists and writers
195pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.
£12.50.
0701127920
Montaigne's Tower and other poems
72pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0436188066

Geoffrey Grigson's *Recollections* is about the nuances of knowing. When this "Cornish-East Anglian parson's son" first came to London in his middle twenties he only knew, he says, about authors. He lacked the self-confidence, Oxford notwithstanding, even to imagine being in the know. But he couldn't have worried. The "Vlennese Irish Jewish" girl who lived across the landing at his King's Road digs just happened to have Antonia White as an older chum. And, bigger coup by far, Grigson's first wife turned out not only to have hailed from St Louis, Missouri, but to have lived in the very same street as the Eliots. "So you are Tom Galt's daughter", the great man greeted the offspring of his rakish erstwhile schoolmate during tea at Alice Herbert's flat – she the keen patroness of bright literary hopefuls. It was not, to be sure, the most promising of starts for Grigson himself, but it was undoubtedly a start.

Before very long he was right there in the cultural deep end and swimming keenly, even butting the other swimmers and shooting them up to the shallows. That is to say, he was domiciled in Hampstead, friendly with his neighbour Herbert Read, and with the artists who came to Read's soirées – Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore. He'd also rapidly become the books editor of the awful night-wing *Morning Post* and was keeping up his own magazine *New Verse*, home of the Audenesque and all its familiars, on the sale of *Morning Post* review copies ferried down in weekly taxi-loads to T. J. Gaston's oasis for needy hacks in Chancery Lane. Already, then, by the time he was thirty, Grigson was a man with authoritative opinions, and patronage to dispense.

He kept Dylan Thomas in funds by giving him thrillers to review for the *Post*. Even the fierce loner Wyndham Lewis, always short of cash, was soon seeking out Grigson, priming the pump with an ABC tea near Leicester Square. Memorably, a man dropped dead at the next table. It was an apt touch, since the poor man had been slipping within earshot of two of twentieth-century literature's harshest tongues. No poet is recorded as having dropped dead while reading *New Verse*, though many might well have. In every way, the once diffident Cornish lad (at least, that's his story) had become a body to reckon with.

The taste for the authority that knowledge brings is very evident in *Recollections*. Infectiously, Grigson lets loose his love of inside stories, new news, unstate gossip. A whole section here, entitled "Items", passes on such tasty morsels as his never having heard T. S. Eliot laugh; pleasure crackles off the page as Grigson retells the report of a military VIP admitting he'd kept his bottom pressed to the wall of a BBC lift which also had the raucous Guy Burgess in it, or tells how Grigson's dafish antagonist Roy Campbell – who once raised a drunken knoberry to Grigson in Regent Street and then crowed in a telegram to Edith Sitwell, another of Grigson's pet hates, that Grigson had been publicly beaten – he-manishly leapt into the bulging at Arles, only to be knocked over by the bull which then licked the prone old boaster's face.

Inside knowledge on the scale of Grigson's *Recollections* is undoubtedly the kind of power that attracts some literary people. Sharing the accumulated knowings of the like-minded multiplies that peculiar hold on power over others, which is, one guesses, one reason Grigson went in for and still endorses the groupishness of the 1930s. "Commands" is his telling word for the sectarian divisions of the 1930s London literary world. And with Grigson in a major command, dislikes were sported like open razors. The *New Verse* mob had little liking, for instance, for the boys and girls of *Scrutiny*. It was a "body-builder for poets". Grigson still admires his old tag. The Grigson-

Read lot once sat down and plotted the downfall of the Hominites (ineffectually, as it happens). Grigson's ancient vexation with Ruthven Todd – he recalls him as deceitful, odd, squalid, a trespasser on hospitality, a stealer of his books – still clearly rankles. Some rancour is, in the 1930s way, only to be expected.

For his part now, Grigson seeks to defend Auden's famous, and often sneered-at, end-of-decade declaration that we must love one another or die. With seeming conviction, Grigson relates it to the biblical statement, "Who loveth not his brother abideth in death". And he loves some, at least, of his literary neighbours staunchly. His celebration of artists, in particular his friends Henry Moore and Ben Nicholson, and of friendship itself, couldn't be more powerful or more moving. Friends, as Grigson recalls them, help each other in thankless tasks like sifting the bogs in your rural cottage garden, they lend or give you valuable paintings and sculptures, they calm down the excited, and give the neurotic all the attention they need. Friendship on this account is, above all, the affection that seeks no instant reward, expects no quick worldly mileage in return; and Grigson makes a memorable point here of advertising the merits of writers he's known whom it has been, and still is, unfashionable to admire: the likes of Clere Parsons, Joy Scovell, Bernard Spencer, Geoffrey Taylor. He loudly scorns Cyril ("Pig") Connolly and Evelyn Waugh for cultivating the safe bets, the right people, and he allows suspicions of doing that to hang over Stephen Spender. Occasionally this volume begins to read as if the old Grigsonian waspishness might be yielding under the pressure of maturer considerations, Audenesque aphorizing and/or the biblical influences of the parental vicarage. But not for long. Bracingly, the old eager sectarian hostilities – against Bloomsbury's painters, the Sitwells, all Wyndham Lewis despisers, public-school heads, cultural grandees like Kenneth Clark, John Keats and Cecil Day Lewis (put down still further by having his notorious line about seeing a Communist and feeling small misquoted – Grigson misrecalls "a Red" as being in question) – all get jammed again, more or less, into their old unmellowed pillories. What's more, just as of old, only the closest of the professed chums remain immune. Perhaps, after all, he thinks, Herbert Read never did "look a picture in the face". And Spender – for all his "holiness" – might have been better off thinking of the "truly great" a bit less than continually. And we can't help reflecting that Ruthven Todd, the much maligned, was once a friend of Grigson's. And Dylan Thomas – now unforgettably done for by Grigson as Dirty Dylan, the Ditch, the Snotty Troll – was once, we recall, pretty hotly tipped by *New Verse*. Was Bonamy Dobrée taken in by Dylan, Grigson wonders? But why was Grigson, we wonder? Unapologetically, he makes up for the old lapse with heaped venom.

Grigson's zest for cursing others is equalled only by his wish to remain uncursed himself (he worries over his one-time friend John Betjeman's fabled cursing of him up on White Horse Hill). These recollections are full of the extended paradoxical play between Grigson's perversely dual wish both to have friends and to make enemies. But then, Grigson's work is rather stacked with paradox. He's the devoted provincial who loved lordling it over the metropolis; the raucous New Cuiser and gentility-hater who keeps celebrating BBC chaps and such who had the English gentleman's trick of polite rudeness; the sneerer who finds sneerers always deplorable; the dedicated Modernist who's perennial touchstones are Eliot and Picasso, Braque and Henry Moore but who thinks and writes with an eye for birds and wild flowers, fish, gardens and seaweed just as if Georgian tastes hadn't once been dumped so vociferously into the Modernist vomitory.

In Grigson's book, God wots still that garden is a lovesome thing. Grigson likes that familiar line, and the line of thought it opens, and the poem it starts off, and the kind of anthologies it used to appear in – he even compiles anthologies himself – despite what Graves and Riding thought about all those things. Noticing the small things of the natural world, collecting the poems that do such noticing, keeping faith in fact with Hardy and Edward Thomas, and for Grigson necessary elements in

being alive, of respecting the world we live in, of being human and as "religious" as he declares all poets ought to be. A responsive curiosity, an eclectic liking for odds and ends, is what he professes repeated admiration for. This, he tells us, is what attracts him in John Piper, J. R. Ackerley and Ben Nicholson, and in his old favourite minority reading, the magazine *Antiquity*. Curio-gathering is, of course, as Grigson has no need to underline, the great virtue of his beloved Auden's poetry. Great poets, great human beings, Grigson keeps suggesting, have this capacity for surprising affections and admirations – even, Grigson tolerantly allows, on occasion the curious taste of an Eliot or Auden for Christian orthodoxies.

Grigson's own openness to experience is never quite as open as he declares his greatest friends' to be. And he would never, of course, go back to Christianity, never go that far. His latest volume of verse, *Montaigne's Tower and other poems*, shows his old scepticism about theological comforts reasserting itself the more as he feels his physical end drawing nigh. He doesn't much care, naturally, for the idea of dying (the *Recollections* are much enraged and saddened by what he believes were untimely and needless deaths – those of his own first wife and Norah Spencer, both dying with TB on the eve of the development of preventive antibiotics; Clere Parsons dying in an Oxford hospital that was tragically unaware of his need for insulin). But as he approaches his eightieth birthday, Grigson is evidently attending to what he calls the "half tender, half ironic / Whisper from the dead". And unsolemn about it as Grigson always is, death still, inevitably, closes all; it's the final "horizon which / Is edged by nothing".

So what are mainly left to the poet, especially when a Yeatsian nugging sets in, when "you ask your sad / Self what you have done? What / You have made?", are acts of remembering. Finely, he recalls a picnic, "together", sitting on yellow bales among blue hills under rose clouds, and then going over "that photo alone" that was stuck, "after", "On one page in your album". Hardy would have recognized the activity and the feelings. Memory is offered as a powerful bulwark against mortality. The olives of course, in "Wild Threshing: Olive Trees", last much longer than personal memories do. And the rich man in "Death of a

Rich Scholarly Bachelor" can hang about a long time in the rough purchased likeness carved on the library of the medieval foundation he has endowed. But just remembering and recording memories are what Grigson cheats death with.

The poem "B.N.", for instance, remembers Ben Nicholson – the master of line and driver of fast cars – in his process of recalling French riverscapes in his low-relief artworks; and it has to be read alongside the superb *Recollections* piece which also recalls that same process of recalling. Likewise, the title-poem "Montaigne's Tower" celebrates yet one more location that's proved good for "recalling. I would say" – "For being benign and wise, for loving / In words", and caps Grigson's perpetual activity, not least in the *Recollections*, of seeking to animate a sacramental sense of place, particularly places associated with great writers and artists. Grigson likes natural things, but he likes natural things which have cultural associations even more: "isn't there a spiritualization", he asks, in Ronsard's "essays of the country immediately around the Château de Montaigne in the Dordogne and the tower in which Montaigne sat and thought and wrote, in the orchards, the meadows, the valley immediately below the terrace of the *château*, and the way the sun strikes the *château* walls and the sides of his valley?" This is why Grigson visits artistic homes and graves, belletristic though this might seem to more up-to-date readers. He even cultivates plants that carry literary memories – Viper's Bugloss for Crabbe, irises from Balzac's *château* at Séché, and so on. Nature plain, but also literary nature; association copy. It's the most resonant Grigson paradox this, the mix of literary naturalist and nature-watching poet-critic, the interconnection announced in the edginess of the poem "Art Gallery Window". There is, it's allowed, good stuff to be contemplated inside and outside the gallery; but most memorable, and most to Grigson's purposes,

there is also to be practised an art of looking steadily outward through Windows of galleries of art.

Surprised by the joys of such layered looking, Grigson even forgets for a while to carp or to score over somebody else. And that's his best kind of knowing, because it's also his best kind of loving.

Overnight with the famous

J. K. L. Walker

ELAINE BORISH
Literary Lodgings
249pp. Constable. £9.95.
009 4651809

Literary Lodgings has been conceived from the simple and not unpromising idea that literary-minded travellers will prefer to put up at hotels with literary associations. So Elaine Borish has gathered some three dozen such establishments up and down the country (more down than up, it transpires; little seems to have happened north of Lichfield). Some were formerly the homes of writers, others hotels or inns patronized by writers; most acknowledge the literary connection if only in named bedrooms or public accommodation.

It quickly becomes apparent that once the association has been pointed out there isn't usually a great deal more to be said; the visitor and his imagination are left to get on with it. Many of the entries will under this kind of pointlessness: Disraeli nursing his gout at Bournemouth, Henry James passing through Oxford, Jane Austen staying overnight at Dartford, Kipling honeymooning in Dover Street, Lewis Carroll (perhaps) as a guest of the Liddells at Llandudno. Slightly more a *propos* is the information that Thackeray wrote the first numbers of *Vanity Fair* in Brighton and Kenneth Grahame, from Falmouth, the letters to his son which were the genesis of *The Wind in the Willows*. Chagford, on Dartmoor, provided Evelyn Waugh with a retreat over the years where he worked on novels from *Black Mischief* to *Brideshead*, getting through 3,000 words of the latter in three hours on February 14, 1944. Edith Wharton, in contrast, managed only a fifty-two-line poem

beginning "Wonderful was the long secret night you gave me, my Lover" after a night spent with William Morton Fullerton in the Charing Cross Hotel in 1909, but no doubt the working conditions were not comparable.

At Alfoxden House, Somerset, Wordsworth and Coleridge collaborated on the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1797-8. That William's library is now the Oak Room Bar might not have pleased Dorothy much; nor, one fancies, would Bloomsbury be overjoyed to learn that Talland House, the Stephens' holiday house at St Ives, is today "comprised of self-contained, comfortably furnished and well-equipped flats, designed to offer guests all the amenities that enhance the perfect holiday". It can be nothing but good news though, that, since the days of Byron and Augusta Leigh, Swynford Paddocks now "dispels dark and gloomy accusations of dreaded incest in its bright, cheerful and elegant atmosphere".

Dark and gloomy accusations of dreaded brochure-writers' prose are still around, on the other hand. Most establishments attract several paragraphs of fulsome prose which is out of place in a work with claims to objectivity. Devotees of Michelin will note that a third of Ms Borish's entries are unrepresented in the 1984 *Guide*. These, perhaps, will reassure visitors reluctant to have their sensibilities dulled by comfort.

Because the connection between writer and venue can in most cases be stated in no more than a few lines, Ms Borish resorts to padding out her material with potted biography: the book, in fact, largely consists of this. It may be seen as a further imaginative aid to the literary-minded guest as he sips his nightcap in his hotel room, but much prior softening up in the bar and the television lounge would be needed to arrive at this view.

The Tradition of Return

The Implicit History of Modern Literature

Jeffrey M. Perl

Focusing on Rousseau, Burckhardt and Pater, Nietzsche and Freud, Tolstoy, James, Lawrence, Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, Jeffrey M. Perl reassesses modernism in order to enrich our understanding of the direction literary culture has taken since the Renaissance. \$42.50 (U.S.)

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Princeton University Press
15A Epsom Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 3JT

of meaning, and the problem of consciousness. Flanagan considers the pet claim of John Searle, this year's Reith lecturer, that programs cannot exhibit mentality because they lack a semantics. Existing computers have a most impoverished mental life because they interact with the world in highly restricted ways. They manipulate symbols in a purely formal manner without any grasp of what the symbols denote. One area of current work in cognitive science is the development of programs that effectively take an input from a television camera and from it construct a three-dimensional representation of the objects in

the world giving rise to the image. As the computer's representations of the world are enriched, so too it should be possible to enhance its grasp of meaning. There remains the barrier of consciousness. Cognitive scientists are divided on the issue of whether or not it is a computational process. Flanagan writes, echoing many such claims: "It is hard to see how the right qualitative character could emerge from the wrong kind of organic stuff, let alone from a plastic and metal electrical device." This line of argument falls into the same trap as the "cogito" — the assumption that the nature of reality is illuminated by

what one can doubt. But, so too does the contrary argument. The issue is only likely to be resolved by attempts to formulate, and to implement, the sort of parallel computational architecture that is called for by the division between conscious and unconscious mental processes. What is clear is that no existing computer begins to approximate this design.

The *Science of the Mind* touches upon many other challenges to the cognitive sciences — rationality, free will, and the extent to which genes determine mental phenomena. Its author deftly takes apart bad arguments, and puts the pieces together again to solve a series of

intriguing puzzles. What the book lacks, however, is an overall thesis or organizing framework. This weakness shows up in the team it fields to represent the development of the cognitive sciences: Freud is in, but Helmholtz (the architect of the unconscious inference) is out. Skinner is in (for bypassing the mind), but Craik (who refused to take the de- tour) is not. E. O. Wilson is in but David Marr does not even reach the index. Owen Flanagan thinks of science as having a narrative structure; he tells us excellent stories about his team. His book would have been even better if it had also had a story of its own to tell.

The significance of squiggles

David Papineau

JOHN SEARLE
Minds, Brains and Science
102pp. BBC Publications. £8.95 (paperback
£5.25).
0 563 20286 6

John Searle's Reith Lectures have been widely received as a timely exposé of those woolly-minded computer-lovers who believe that computers can think, and indeed that the human mind is just a biological computer. In print Professor Searle's lectures retain the same punchy and engaging style as they had on the air. They also give us the opportunity to decide whether there is anything behind Searle's antipathy to computers apart from simple prejudice.

Searle starts off well enough. In the first lecture he raises various questions about the mind's place in the material world. Firstly, there is the problem of causal interaction — how can the mind influence the brain, and vice versa? Then there are the twin problems of consciousness and subjectivity — how is it that mental states involve subjective feelings of conscious awareness? And then there is the problem of intentionality — how is it that mental states can be about things, can reach out and refer to things other than themselves?

Searle deals with the first problem, the problem of causal interaction, by endorsing the now standard modern version of materialism. Mental events stand to brain events as, say, the solidity of a table stands to its molecular structure. "One doesn't," in the latter case, think of the solidity as something puzzlingly detached from the molecular structure. No more should one think of pains, or beliefs, or emotions, as inhabiting some realm cut off from the neurophysiology of the brain. In neither case are there two substances, two different kinds of stuff. There are simply two different scales of description, two perspectives with different levels of focus.

Searle's remarks on consciousness and subjectivity are less satisfactory, however. In effect, he simply says that feelings manifestly do exist, and so we'd better believe it. True enough. But how does this sit with Searle's materialism? There is a long and respectable tradition, stemming from Descartes, which takes the existence of consciousness to show there must be more to mind than matter. Searle obviously believes that this tradition is mistaken, and that there is no reason why certain purely material states shouldn't be consciously experienced by the beings that have them. But then he surely owes us at least some account of where the Cartesian goes wrong, and of how we should resist their intuitions.

The problem of intentionality is the focus of the second lecture. My desire to visit Naples relates me to a place where I have never been. My belief that Bob Hawke won the Australian election reaches out and refers to a man on the other side of the world. How can one thing be about another in this way? This is where Searle's antipathy to computers comes in. For he thinks that however the trick is done, it is obvious that we can do it and computers can't.

His rationale for discriminating between humans and computers in this way is the "Chinese room argument". For those who haven't heard it, the Chinese room argument goes like this. A man is sitting in a room containing lots of bits of paper with squiggles on. Further bits of squiggles are passed in and out of the room. The man has a book of rules specifying, for

every combination of squiggles that comes in, which set of squiggles he should pass back out. Unbeknownst to the man, the incoming squiggles are all good Chinese questions. And the rule book is designed to ensure that the man always passes out the right Chinese answer. But obviously the man doesn't thereby understand Chinese. However, such formal manipulation of symbols is all computers ever do. So computers must lack understanding too.

This is not a good argument, but it does get under one's skin. One can see why Searle has dined out on it for so long. For it is extremely difficult to identify the exact point where he leads us astray. And so each philosopher who disagrees with Searle has his or her own theory of what is wrong with the argument. My own response to it is that understanding Chinese isn't a reasonable first task to set a computer. Understanding Chinese is a highly sophisticated activity. Or rather, since the special complexities of Chinese are not the point, understanding any language is a highly sophisticated activity. By no means all intentional states involve a grasp of some public language. A dog can remember where a bone is buried; a chimpanzee can believe there are a lot of bananas up a tree. Maybe dogs and chimps aren't fully self-conscious. But it is not feelings of conscious awareness that are presently at issue, just the possibility of having thoughts about things. So dogs and chimps seem able to have intentional states, even though they understand no language. Similarly it seems wrong to say that all human beliefs involve language. Even when I believe that there are bananas up that tree, there is no direct sense in which my belief depends on my linguistic abilities.

One can think of understanding a language as a matter of having beliefs about words. To understand a Chinese sentence is to have the belief that a certain string of symbols represents a certain state of affairs. But this then only emphasizes the point that understanding a language is a quite special and sophisticated intellectual ability. For not all beliefs are beliefs about the representational powers of words.

Why then does Searle take it that the appropriate test case is whether computers can understand Chinese? No doubt his thought is that, whatever goes on in dogs and chimps and humans, computer operations consist entirely of the formal manipulation of symbols. So if a computer can do any thinking at all, it surely ought to be able to understand such symbols.

There is a sense in which Searle is right to think that digital computers spend all their time formally manipulating symbols. But only someone who quite misunderstands the suggested comparison between computers and minds will infer that they must therefore understand those formal symbols. Suppose I wanted to build an artificial chimp. One of the first things I would do would be to give it some structured internal state which was triggered whenever its sense organs were presented with bananas; and which led it to return to the bananas when it needed nutrition. This structured state would consist of an array of internal switches, or, at a different level of description, of a set of numbers in certain registers in the robot-chimp's memory bank. To this extent one could think of the structured internal state as a string of formal symbols. And having such an internal state is just the kind of thing that would incline computer enthusiasts to say that the robot-chimp was capable of believing that there were bananas up that tree. But they wouldn't dream of saying that therefore the chimp understood the formal symbols that

structured array of switches inside its head. The chimp wouldn't have any beliefs about those symbols, let alone beliefs which told it what those symbols represented.

I might even try to design a chimp that understood Chinese. To do this I might give it further internal states, in virtue of which it could be said to associate certain Chinese symbols with such non-linguistic things as bananas. So, for instance, I might give it some further internal state, again consisting of some structured array of switches, which ensured that whenever it saw a certain set of squiggles it would get into the original believing-there's-a-banana-up-that-tree state. Given all this, one might argue that the chimp understood those Chinese symbols to refer to bananas. But it would just be a confusion to conflate this with the claim that the chimp understood the structured array of switches which gave it this understanding of Chinese.

Of course there is much more to understanding human languages than simple word-banana associations. But the point is that whatever kind of understanding anybody, or any computer, has of anything, it is not supposed to be an understanding of some structured array inside its head. Rather, the thinker is supposed to understand other things, because he has such a structured array of formal symbols inside his head. Nobody (except perhaps the programmer) needs to understand the internal formal symbols themselves. And so arguments about what would or would not be understood by a little man manipulating such symbols inside the head, or inside a Chinese room, are of no significance.

Having come this far, it should be admitted that we are left with a real philosophical problem. If having beliefs is just a matter of having sentence-like structures inside one's head, then we still need to explain where the "aboutness" of mental states comes from. One can't just rest, as many cognitive scientists seem to, with the terminology of "sentences", or "symbols", or "representations". For, without any internal homunculi to breathe significance into them, it is not at all clear how brute internal structures can stand for anything. And to this extent Searle is justified in urging that "syntax is not semantics". Where he is not justified is in his faith that an explanation of semantics will be possible for humans but not for computers. After all, there is no obvious reason why biological "wetware" should be any better at imbuing internal structures with semantic significance than silicon "hardware".

A natural suggestion at this point is that the "aboutness" of internal structures is something to do with their causal relations to external objects. Thus the array of switches inside the robot-chimp's head could be argued to be about bananas precisely because it was caused by the presence of bananas; and because it caused the chimp to go back to the bananas when it was hungry. As it happens, this suggestion is rather less straightforward than it seems. But if there is anything to this line of thought, then clearly it will work as well for silicon brains as for spongy ones. A corollary worth noting is that familiar office computers, and even big laboratory computers, won't in any serious sense have states with intentional powers. For unlike the robot-chimp's brain, and indeed unlike our brains, commercial digital computers aren't designed to interact with specific features of the external world, but simply to be easily adjustable labour-saving devices. It is probably also worth noting that nothing in all this is supposed to show that computers are conscious. One of the Radio 4 announcers

advertised Searle as demolishing the theory that "thermostats have feelings". This is no doubt how many people have understood Searle, and indeed what gives the Chinese room argument, with its talk of understanding Chinese, and consequent connotations of some kind of inner illumination, much of its appeal. But that's not how the Chinese room argument is intended. Searle says very little about consciousness, and certainly his explicit statements present the Chinese room argument as about aboutness, not about feelings.

In the third lecture Searle continues his attack on cognitive science. Here the target is not just the strong claim that computers can think, but any attempt to use the computer analogy to illuminate the workings of our brains. Searle is sceptical about the existence of identifiable levels of cerebral organization, analogous to "software" programmes, mediating between our neuronal "wetware" and our mental life. But he admits that future research might yet prove him wrong, and indeed mentions examples of existing computer-influenced work, such as David Marr's book on *Vision*, which many would argue have already discredited his pessimism.

After this Searle elaborates his own picture of the sciences of man, in which, as one would expect, the intentionality of human thought plays a central role. There is a good argument in the fifth lecture. Many contemporary philosophers believe in the possibility of "special sciences" in the human realm, whose categories are indefinable in physical terms, but which nevertheless deliver some degree of predictive generalization. Searle points out that this won't do. For if there are general truths about what will happen, say, in given economic circumstances, then, as Searle puts it, "the molecules will have to be blowing in the right direction" on all such occasions. But this would be an absurd coincidence, given the supposed mismatch between the concepts of economics and the concepts of physics. Searle takes this argument to demonstrate a radical division between understanding in terms of intentionality and explanation in terms of predictive generalizations. But the argument could as well be run the other way. Those impressed by the extent to which economic life, and indeed interpersonal life, is predictable, might conclude instead that the concepts of the human sciences must after all be commensurate with those of physics.

The final lecture is about free will. Here Searle will disappoint those who expect him to use the supposed divide between mental and physical explanation to find a niche for human freedom. For Searle recognizes that being undetermined under a mental description doesn't give us free will, given that we are also physical beings and what happens is fixed by physics. He does allow that, as agents, we have an inescapable belief in our own free will. But he nevertheless concludes, it isn't really so. One only wonders why someone who is so unimpressed by our prejudice that we have special powers of free choice is so certain that we humans have special powers of intentional thought.

Understanding Identity Statements by Thomas V. Morris has recently been published (150pp. Aberdeen University Press. £12.50, paperback, £8.50, 0 08 030388 9). In Part One Morris analyses identity statements under such headings as "The Objectual Analysis" and "Identity by Necessity and Information", while in Part Two he examines Leibniz's Law and the difficulties it raises in respect of cross-category identities.

Relating to machines

Stuart Sutherland

SHERY TURKLE
The Second Self: Computers and the human spirit
387pp. Granada. £12.50 (paperback, £6).
0 246 12216 1

In the early days of market research, the investigator used to interview a few randomly selected people on their attitudes to a given product. In the light of their replies, he would try to construct a plausible story about their image of the product and about how that image was derived. He would take into account the style of life, the needs and desires of his respondents, and in interpreting their views he would not hesitate to use any Freudian ideas that came into his head: he might, for example, allege that a given brand of perfume was threatening to women because the bottle was too overtly phallic. After this method had been in use for many years, it occurred to the market research organizations that the interviewer might bring to his task his own prejudices and preconceptions and that he might unconsciously influence the replies he obtained. Henceforth, they used this rather haphazard method of research only as a means of setting up hypotheses which they then tested by detailed questionnaires administered to a large sample. Sometimes the questionnaires bore out the ideas of the original investigator; often they did not.

Sociology progresses more slowly than business. Unstructured interviewing and observation, particularly when carried out by someone living in the community under investigation, is now somewhat grandly called "ethnography" and it is rarely thought prudent to try to confirm the results by a more systematic survey. Sherry Turkle's study of the effects of computers on people has the merits and demerits of the ethnographic method: it supplies some interesting hypotheses, but they need to be confirmed. She interviewed over two hundred children and the same number of "grown men" (the reason for the use of inverted commas will shortly appear), all of whom were engaged with computers. Perhaps the worst fault of her

study is that she did not interview a similar number of people engaged on some totally different pursuit, such as the study of history, to make sure that her findings really do reflect exposure to computers and are not merely the product of contemporary American culture.

The most interesting of her speculations about children is that interaction with computers makes them see themselves in a different way. Since they think of computers as intelligent and able to converse, Aristotle's definition of man as a rational animal is no longer enough to segregate man from inanimate objects. The children fall back on psychological notions — computers do not have emotions, they cannot feel pain and they cannot cheat since they are not moral beings. Professor Turkle maintains that because these children see computers as having intellect but not feelings, they come to dissociate the two when thinking of people and she is distinctly alarmist about the consequences of this dissociation. She claims that in people the two are "inseparable", but she offers no evidence for her allegation that "the child's sharpened distinction between intellect and feelings can lead to a shallow and sentimental way of thinking about 'feelings'". One could argue that anyone who confused the two would be in a poor way and likely to make a mess of both.

She maintains that according to their personalities different children develop different programming styles. The "hard" programmer sets out to obtain mastery over the computer, the "soft" programmer feels "part of the system" and "negotiates" with it. In terms of working programs, the distinction is unclear and she did not take the precaution of having the children's programs assessed by experienced programmers to discover whether they could systematically be divided into hard and soft.

On the issue of whether early exposure to computing benefits children, she is divided. Interacting with a computer and conversing with it through a visual display may for some children provide an easy way into mathematics (or even, in one child, into writing poetry), particularly if they are frightened of making mistakes before the teacher or the class. The computer may also provide a sop to loneliness.

Shoppers' guide

Jeffrey Hackney

JOHN BEAR
Computer Wimp
281pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 15883 6

Computer Wimp aims to list 166 things everyone should know before buying a first (small, business) computer, or giving up on the one they already have. It is said to be packed with information on how to buy; on the shameful warranty situation; computer fear, anguish and despair; and a great deal more. There are over a hundred illustrations, mainly old line drawings with computers anachronistically insinuated, and the general style of presentation is Haight-Ashbury Global Village Gothic: the writing has the kind of sincere directness that seemed so refreshing twenty years ago. Nevertheless, some of it is amusing, and some of the advice, when you can extricate it from the ornamentation, is genuinely helpful. The tip not to discard the previous system as soon as you acquire microchip facilities is as valuable as it is obvious. The directive never to buy first is no longer universally valid, however, and those who followed advice to wait till prices tumbled before they bought a BBC micro will doubt its universal validity. The advice on eating for your equipment is almost recklessly witty; and the book as a whole is a victim of the delays inherent in book publishing, in that some of it is already out of date: some of the data about memory, prices, add-ons and word processing possibilities are already history.

But *Computer Wimp* is more seriously flawed. John Bear is dismissive of some writing on the grounds that authors do not have the expertise to give "perspective". There are two problems with this. First, our particular author, or editor, reveals him to be disaster-prone, or

Second, and more important, he is trapped by the pride of being a 1975 computer owner, and the gloomy consequences of that are misleading for a novice in 1984. If someone were to write a book on how to buy a car and proceeded to warn his readers that when he first started to drive he had to pump the tyres up every morning, after he had warmed up the spark plugs in the oven, and that he had to jack up one back wheel in order to crank-start the engine, we would accuse him of something like a category mistake. And yet the relative time lapse is about the same. What someone aiming to buy a computer actually needs is a simple book, probably no more than five pages long, directing him to the computer magazines and giving a simple checklist of how to go about acquiring computer, printer and software. He also needs to be warned that today's computer advertisers are the spiritual successors of yesterday's soap-powder peddlars. He needs to discover which machines are overpriced, over-praised and over here.

What this book makes up for in jokes, then, it lacks in straightforward critical advice. And there is a problem about the title. A wimp is defined on the jacket as an unhappy and frustrated person. That did not, alas, with youthful usage as I hear it, so I did a small search. Ignoring the "Window-based Integrated Mouse-driven Program" acronym, a sample of students produced a fairly uniform range of meaning, restricted to the male of the species and indicating feebleness of spirit, weakness and lack of confidence, and lack of confidence in one's own ability. It was clearly not the same thing at all. I was stumped to discover, thanks to a courteous lexicographer, that this more or less agreed with the provisional definition on the cards at the OED, and even more pleased to be able to redress the sexist limitation on this particular piece of abuse by discovering that Partridge, confined to young women, and thought that it might have been taken from "wimp".

On the other hand, children can use the computer as a safe way of obtaining control over something and thus need not develop relationships with other children. Surprisingly, she hardly comments on the dangers of home computers, which for some children can be far more absorbing than television and which can therefore remove them in their leisure hours from all contact with other people.

Turning to adult programmers, Turkle maintains that they too have different styles of programming which reflect their inner needs. She makes the rather implausible suggestion that one reason why people strive to acquire a complete understanding of their programs and of how they are assembled and executed is that they cannot understand their country's economy: she forgets that curiosity and the desire to solve problems are among the most fundamental drives in most mammals and need not be the by-product of frustration of some other drive.

The attempt to obtain total understanding and total mastery over the computer reaches its apogee in the computer hacker. He is to be found in most large computer installations and is dedicated to obtaining complete mastery of the system: he devotes himself to invading other users' files (the storage sections of the computer holding their programs and data), to fixing bugs in the system, to solving problems by ingenious and — to the extent that they were not foreseen by the designers of the systems programs — underhand tricks, and sometimes to the invention of elaborate computer games, like "Dungeons and Dragons". It has become a tradition for hackers to emerge only at night because until recently most large computer systems were fully loaded in the daytime. The hacker's fascination with programming dominates his life and he abandons almost all activities that would reduce the time spent at the console. He is, in fact, an addict. Turkle provides a splendid description of the hacker and his habits, but she is on less sure ground when she claims that many people become hackers as a defence against ugliness or self-hatred. It is true that hackers may choose to withdraw from the rest of the world, but they often form a lively enough community with one another. Does one have to hate oneself to become a monk or a nun? And are potential hackers really uglier students than potential historians?

Implicit throughout Turkle's arguments is the assumption that dedication to an intellectual end is bad whereas dedication to "relationships" or to the arts is good: computer buffs have failed to grow up. But professional singing or piano-playing may require almost as much dedication as hacking. It is true that much but not all hacking is a selfish enterprise, but then so is professional chess. There is something unusual about anyone who is dedicated to anything, but rather than claiming that hacking is a "flight from relationships with people to relationship with machine" — a defensive manoeuvre, Turkle might have tried to establish whether the incidence of mental illness was greater in hackers than in historians.

The final way in which computers have influ-

enced people is, according to Turkle, through the model that programs can provide of our own thought processes: here the most important work is in Artificial Intelligence (AI), the attempt to write programs which do things that had they been done by a person would be thought to require intelligence. Her main fear is that the existence of intelligent programs may make people see themselves as machines and remove any scope for notions such as freedom of the will. But the pressure to regard our bodies as machines has been increasing for many years and comes as much from advances in our understanding of the brain as from AI. Brain lesions or the administration of a vast number of psychotropic drugs can be shown to have highly predictable effects on intellectual capacities, mood, emotion and behaviour. If the brain obeys the causal laws of physics and chemistry, what room does this leave for freedom of the will? Nobody has devised a satisfactory answer though many have tried.

Turkle is also worried by the fact that people working in AI often use some of its concepts metaphorically to describe their own minds. The worry is groundless. First, many workers in AI have a well-developed sense of humour and a desire to shock: Marvin Minsky was surely displaying both attributes when he described a program as "self-destructive" and referred to a mistake it made as a "Freudian slip". It is equally foolish to take seriously the proposal that a computer with a sufficient number of interacting intelligent programs would be conscious. Second, there is no evidence that the decisions workers in AI make about their lives or the attitudes they adopt towards others are systematically different from those of people in other occupations, as Turkle helpfully acknowledges elsewhere in the book. It seems improbable that computers will radically change our view of ourselves, though they may continue to throw light on the nature of intelligence.

All in all, *The Second Self* is an interesting but frustrating book. It contains many ideas but they are often loosely formulated and ill-substantiated. Moreover, although it demonstrates that computers can fascinate and even obsess people of all ages, it does not really answer the question why this should be so. One suspects that computer freaks are more obsessed than bridge-players, radio hams, train-spotters, football supporters, crossword addicts and so on, but why? Is it that the computer is always available and does not need two to play? Is it the excitement of getting a program to run? Is it the feeling that if one just stays at the console a little longer the last bug will be removed? Is it that a program is always something entirely of one's own, like a piece of writing, in contrast to a mathematical proof which, unless one is a professional mathematician, will be extremely similar to existing proofs of the same theorem? Or is it, as Turkle maintains, the desire to establish mastery over a machine which constantly interacts with the user? For whatever reason, computers satisfy many people's intellectual curiosity and their love of solving problems, which are after all as much a part of the human mind as love and hate.

TURING'S MAN

Western Culture in the Computer Age
J. D. Bolter

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S. R. Graubard, editor of *Daedalus*.
£12.95

DUCKWORTH

The Old Piano Factory
43 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1

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The devil's circuitry

Lou Burnard

PETER LARGE
The Micro Revolution Revisited
216pp. Pinter. £9.95.
0861873793
MICHAEL SHALLIS
The Silicon Idol: The micro revolution and its social implications
188pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95.
0192158775

In the past twenty-five years the computer has been transformed from a mysterious piece of scientific apparatus attended by serious men in white coats into a suitable gift for precocious eight-year-olds. It has achieved the status of a consumer durable, becoming a mark of social standing. Unlike the washing-machine or the home video, however, it has also completely transformed the working environment and even (for those who still have any) the nature of work itself. Its indiscriminate reorganization of every aspect of economic activity has not come about overnight, nor yet is it complete, but the rate of change is increasing.

For Peter Large who, as technology correspondent for the *Guardian*, must be - as it were - in touch with the leading edge, the home computer is only the most conspicuous part of a grand transformation scene in which the massive replacement of our communications systems, the spread of automation, the growth of corporate data-bases and the development of the cashless society all have starring roles. It is not just manufacturing industry which is presented with the simple choice of "automate or liquidate", non-manufacturing industry is now undergoing even greater turmoil, as word-processors drain typing pools, data-bases relocate filing-clerks and expert systems render consultants redundant.

Although the impetus behind these changes is primarily the old commercial imperative to do more of the same better and faster, their combined effect, it is asserted, will together prove to be qualitative rather than quantitative. The industrial revolution in which the old dialectics of labour and capital, of productivity and consumerism will lose their significance. A new utopianism, or an old despair, grips apparently sane commentators as their imaginations attempt to grapple with the microchip: it will bring about the end of civilization as we know it; it will bring about a land of milk and honey produced by small collectives in which no one has to work unless they want to; it will create a new disaffected peasantry only controllable by means of an inhuman totalitarianism.

Perhaps it is the headiness of little know-

ledge which encourages the wilder extrapolations of the futurologists. Sober reflection gives no reason to suppose that the indisputably amazing advances in the development of the micro-processor will necessarily be paralleled by equivalent advances in its supporting technology. Most computers still communicate with us by means of an expensive and inefficient luminous screen and a keyboard which was designed over a century ago to be ergonomically inefficient, so that the "typewriter" (as its operator was then called) could not go too fast for the machine's delicate innards. More user-friendly methods of communication are still a long way off, despite the current availability (at a price) of "pucks", "mice" and touch-sensitive screens. Speech recognition systems, into which vast amounts of research money are currently being poured, may prove to be as elusive in this decade as automatic translation of natural language was in the last, and for similar reasons. An allied object of scepticism, at least among the currently computer literate, is the blithe assumption that computer literacy can, or even should, be acquired as simply and as easily as the ordinary sort.

These two reservations do not appear to have occurred to either Michael Shallis or Peter Large: their books have little else in common. Large's analysis is clearly aimed at a receptive audience which is, like him, decently agnostic, mildly satirical, technologically aware and sensibly concerned about social issues. Shallis, who teaches at Oxford's Department of External Studies, is rather less sure of his audience. The defensive note struck in his preface recurs: "any critic of technology is liable to be labelled a Luddite and I would not be surprised if the term was used about myself". The Luddites, however, were driven to their futile activities by technological changes that affected their lives directly and immediately; Shallis appears to be motivated more by an altruistic desire to save the rest of us from spiritual decay, having already purified himself by banishing television, washing-machine and even electric toaster from his own home.

There is more than a hint of the lay preacher in several of his strictures: "To reduce intelligence to mere reason is... degrading and unwholesome"; "The computer was born with 'bad blood'"; "Information technology... is the invention of the devil". Not surprisingly, his greatest scorn is reserved for those loonies of the artificial intelligence who persist in finding (or modelling) fairies at the bottom of the research lab: "It seems to me that before computers have religious or ethical codes built into them, the computer scientists might adopt some of their own to direct their purposes in a suitably moral way."

The home of hardware

Ivan Fallon

ROBERT SOBEL
IBM: Colossus in Transition
360pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £8.95.
0283991453

It is difficult to imagine it, but the great IBM which so dominates the computer world today was once like any other average small, average successful, average managed concern with its average share of dramas, of booms and (very) near busts. Its beginnings were far less distinguished than those of many less successful companies. A wheeler-dealer called Charles Flint, whom Robert Sobel describes as a "supreme individualist" but who may remind others of all too many would-be conglomerators in the City of London, put together, around the turn of the century, a ragbag of unspectacular and unpromising companies with a few paper shuffles and a bit of not-quite-dishonest accounting "creativity".

The centre of what was to grow into the "colossus" of the title made clocks, which the energetic Mr Flint, a believer in free trade (but only if you were a monopoly), promoted by buying out all his competitors. By 1910 the company dominated its industry and reported sales of more than \$1m - hardly earth-shattering even adjusting for inflation. To this Flint

welded a company called the Computing Scale Company of America which made a set of scales that enabled a clerk not only to weigh an item but to calculate its cost at the same time. It also made cheese slicers. There was no logic in the merger at all. But Charles Flint, who predated Jim Slater by nearly seventy years, employed all the same arguments that would be used later by the conglomerators. There is an uncanny familiarity about the companies; they both measured things, and there were benefits to "allied consolidations". There were, indeed, principally to Flint, whose interest in the new company was primarily capital gain. In other words, he was a sharp pusher.

To these two, Flint added a third "allied consolidation": he took over the Tabulating Machine Company which made machines used largely for census reports. Flint called the resulting amalgam by the ungainly name Computing-Tabulating-Recording, or CTR, and it became what is probably the most successful company in the world.

The management was not provided by Flint, who found a chief executive, Thomas Watson, who joined in 1914 and retired in 1956 at the age of eighty-two. The colossus was established during that period: by 1957 the sales figure of \$1m had grown to \$1 billion.

By 1924 Watson had changed the name to International Business Machines - an interesting indication of his thinking (in Britain an "I" in a company's name stood not for "international" but for "Imperial" - Imperial Chemical Industries, Imperial Tobacco and so on). Now, weighing scales and time machines were forced to take second place; calculators were the big growth area in a booming business community.



"The Caxton Analogy." This cartoon is reproduced from *The Joy of Computers*, by Peter Laurie, a well-informed and excellently illustrated book about the manners and customs of the contemporary computer (191pp. Hutchinson. £9.95. 0091530105).

Ironically, Shallis appears to earn his living by teaching people how to use this diabolical device; indeed, doing it rather well, to judge by the two chapters of straightforward technical explication included here. Rather less satisfactory is his fondness for Large Truths (for example that the history of technology is one of increasing abstraction from reality) which tend to obscure as much as they illuminate. The bogeyman of Scientific Reductionism takes a terrible pasting in these pages, as does the principle of scientific neutrality and the idea that the "so-called Protestant work ethic" (a favourite phrase) can be replaced overnight. For Shallis, because the telephone offers only a disembodied voice, it can provide only an unsatisfactory surrogate for human communication; systems which impose only such methods of "interfacing" people are therefore "imperialistic". His doubts about large computer systems are not without value: they do indeed malfunction and do require proper controls and careful validation; this does not, however, make them intrinsically useless or evil.

Despite an engaging dottiness (there are apparently "many cases of people's psychological state adversely affecting the performance of a computer system"), despite the patent meretriciousness of some of his targets (the remainder being straw men or lost causes), despite even his earnestness, Shallis remains curiously unpersuasive, perhaps more because of his wooden prose than his puritanism. By contrast, Large, as a professional journalist, is an adept of the new technology. His book is a composite of short paragraphs, pithy sayings, useful statistics, non-technical explanation, occasional anecdote, trends to note, memorabilia, objects of grave concern. Its words were clearly not composed but processed. No important new development is left unsummarized, no cause for concern deprived of equal time. And yet reading it as a book is remarkably unsatisfying. It is meant to be "blipped" - Alvin Toffler's expressive coinage for what will become the characteristic mode of human information processing once Shallis' nightmares have become reality.

dional" but for "Imperial" - Imperial Chemical Industries, Imperial Tobacco and so on). Now, weighing scales and time machines were forced to take second place; calculators were the big growth area in a booming business community.

One of the most interesting aspects of this book is the feeling of how relatively easy it was, certainly in the company's early days, to develop an idea and find the capital. Flint sometimes created half a dozen new companies a year, and if some of them failed, some of them succeeded to an extent no other company has ever matched. Another unexpected aspect is the emphasis on men like Watson put on staff relations, though he himself had been ruthlessly fired by the man who created the then far bigger NCR.

Watson lived long enough to take IBM into the computer age, but only just. It was only in the 1950s that computers moved into corporations - until then they had largely been used in government departments, universities and weather forecasting centres. Legend still has it at IBM that the decision to move into the production of computers only came with the outbreak of the Korean war, when President Truman sent Watson a letter asking him what IBM could do for the war effort. The defence plants required computers, Tom Watson, the soft then, even as far as the world leader in computing, is only thirty-four years old. Yet by 1959 IBM already had 50 per cent of the

market; its next biggest competitor, Sperry Rand had 12.1 per cent. Nobody else was even in single figure, and no one has been able to dent IBM's market share since.

Professor Sobel relates the story in a chatty, straightforward way, seldom deviating from the central historical theme. We always know clearly where we are, and how each move and each new product came about. There are also helpful little tables which clearly tell where we are in revenue and profit terms, a very relevant yardstick for the financial analyst as well as the corporate historian.

But the second half of the book is much less interesting, and at times unsatisfactory. It was originally written in 1981, and the statistics largely end in 1979; so does the thesis, which means that some important events in the electronic and computing world are not properly considered. For instance, the revolution in financial information with the emergence of Reuters and Teletext has all happened in the past five years, and IBM is now entering that field in partnership with Merrill Lynch. There are whole new areas of information technology which are very much a part of the transition of the colossus but which Professor Sobel ignores. He touches on the challenge from Japan, but again one has the feeling that much has moved on since he last updated the book. But for a clear, uncomplicated history of the creation and early to middle years of a giant, his book is ideal.

Following the story

Tom Shippey

The creators of *Lords of Midnight* (the current "state of the art" computer game) make their readers an offer in the booklet that goes with the game tape. It is that the first person to defeat Doomdark in the game, and to copy all his screens as he goes along, can send in the pictorial record of what has happened, and have it rewritten as a fantasy novel at the game-designers' expense, publication guaranteed. When this book appears, it will be something new, something more (or less) than ghost-writing. It will be a book co-created (one does not like to say "authored") by a writer, a programmer, an element of chance built into the computer, and most obviously by a person who probably cannot write at all, but is good at puzzles of strategy. An oddity, no doubt, or a gimmick. Nevertheless the idea does raise questions, not to mention hackles. Is this the shape of the future? What happens when the computers go up another generation?

Least dramatically, but perhaps in the long run most interestingly, what does all this tell us about fiction? *Lords of Midnight* is poised between being a story and being a game, and one's literary impulse is to dismiss it as a freakish hybrid. However it does satisfy some sort of fictional impulse. Maybe the passive story, the story-that-someone-else-tells-you, has held sway from Stone Age camp-fires to now only because there was no way of organizing anything better. I am confident that the first *Lords of Midnight* novel will not be any good. There is an uneasy sense, though, that in comparing it with *Ulysses*, say, or Margaret Drabble, one is comparing a human baby to an adult chimpanzee. There is no doubt which is the stronger now. But that is not the point.

Computer games are intrinsically new, the product of the past decade. At the moment they still have "limitation" written all over them, and they betray the still unassimilated marks of at least three separate strains of ancestry. One of these is the "arcade game", pioneered by *Space Invaders*. These are essentially games of reflex and motor control, which remain the same regardless of what fiction the creators dream up as a disguise. In *Penetrator*, for instance, you are a low-level fighter pilot hugging the ground, avoiding missiles, bombing radar stations, and aiming for a narrow slit with a cache of neutron bombs inside. But there would be little difference if you opted for a "Star Wars" plot, or if you decided to play *Shadowfax* instead: "Ride the mighty Shadowfax in the war against the dark forces of Mordor [sic]. Use your bolts of lightning to destroy the enemy - but beware - their touch is death!" These games are extraordinarily successful time-consumers, and very hard to stop playing, but the fictional component in them (though clearly necessary) is minimal, a catalyst only.

The interesting thing is that "arcade games" can move a stage up and take in strategy, in a way which clearly looks forward to the full-fledged "adventure game". Take *Atic Atic*. The fiction of this determinedly jokey little game is that the player is trapped in a haunted house. He has to move around, continually operating the keyboard and either avoiding or zapping pumpkins, witches and other bogies, till he finds three sections of a golden key and brings them back to the room with the entrance. So far, not too different from *Penetrator*. But this is a game which it is impossible to win by motor control alone. There are, by my count (certainly wrong), ninety-four rooms in *Atic Atic*; to say nothing of stairs, passages, trapdoors and secret ways - a different set of these latter for Knights or Wizards or Serfs. Many of them are locked. To get in and find the sections of golden key you will need a red key, or a blue key, or a green key, or maybe a yellow one. In any case it is very hard to pick up the red key, guarded by a highly dangerous mummy, unless you already have the red leaf to distract the mummy. In the same way you need the gold cross to keep off Dracula, the money bag to distract the hyppoback, and the blue spanner for some purpose this reviewer was never able to fathom. And - a stroke of brilliant economy! - you can only carry three things at once. There is no way to win at *Atic Atic*, then, unless you have a plan, and a map (in this you have to draw yourself), and update (for each successful game). With that you can

work out which keys you need, which articles you can drop. Without it, speed of finger may give you a good long run, but lead in the end only to a little cross and mortuary tunes.

Mapping in fact seems to be the main current activity of the computer game fan. What computers are good at is remembering very large numbers of "Yes/No" decisions. They are ideally suited, then, for producing mazes. And even the "adventure games", which have no "arcade" or motor control element, show quite clearly that their fictions have been designed to produce scenarios rather like that of *Atic Atic*. Take for instance *Twin Kingdom Valley*. In this, once you have loaded the program into the computer, you find yourself standing on a path outside a cabin. Follow the path, or enter the cabin (the computer asks)? You go into the cabin. There you find a lamp. It is not lit, but if you then follow the right path you will come to a quarry, which exists (in games like this) for the alert player to tell the computer to pick up a flint and let him light the lamp. You have to remember to keep turning the lamp off, or the computer will decide it is out of fuel just when you most need it. But with the lamp on, you can go down a hole, which may take you to the witches' maze (almost no escape), or the Hall of the Forest King, or to Watersmeet, near which - the computer says - a wise man may find "the secret of life".

The point is, that although you are now in a landscape, or even a plot, and surrounded by a recognizable cast of characters, the game is still a "map-and-pick-up" one. Some of the rules are very like *Atic Atic*. If you go into one room, the computer will tell you: "An ill giant is here". The right strategy is to be carrying a jug of water from Watersmeet, and to get the giant to drink it. This cures him and makes him grateful. He is very useful from then on for killing dragons, or carrying heavy booty. But - another infuriating stroke of economy - if he sees a weapon he always picks it up, and he always drops whatever else he is carrying. The game then becomes a kind of monstrous mental juggle, while you work out what are the safe routes to take, where you are bound to lose the giant, where you are bound to need the giant, when your lamp will run out, and many other factors besides. Nevertheless a major component of this game (not like *Atic Atic*) is curiosity: its boundaries and its personnel are not fixed, and there is a sense in which entering another room in it is like turning over another page. In both cases, there is only the implicit guarantee that what happens will not feel wholly out of place.

"Arcade games" lead to "puzzle games", then, and "puzzle games" to "adventure games". This latter group, however, has a second and non-electronic ancestor in "role-playing games" like *Dungeons and Dragons*. You can for instance get combined book-and-programme packages like Joe Dever and Gary Chalk's *Flight from the Dark*, which follows fairly strict D and D rules - rolling dice at the start, then working your way through a maze of numbered paragraphs with a decision at the end of each one, with frequent halts for "combat" of an "arcade game" type. Games of this type feel rather slow and unchallenging: there is too much book in them and not enough program. They do raise a serious doubt, though, and that is why such evidently escapit fictions have seized the computer market. Is it because people who are good with computers are not very good with people? Stories circulate of silent children, absorbed in their own fantasy worlds, tapping out messages to other children on their VDUs, and otherwise taking no notice of their companions at all.

And then there is the Tolkien ancestry. This is very strong indeed (see *Shadowfax* above, and note also the immense success of the *Top bit game*, No 1 in Sinclair User's list of "Top Fifty Spectrum Classics"). Even *Lords of Midnight* looks (as a plot) little more than a catalogue on *Lord of the Rings*. In fifteen pages of Introductory booklets I counted at least a dozen major Tolkien borrowings, from Doomdark the Witchking (a cross between Sauron, Saruman and a Ringwraith), to Rorhron (or Gandalf), the Ice-fer (or Black Breath), the Moon Ring (or One Ring) and Morkin (a pretty clear "hobbit"). There was even a "Gollum-figure" (in this you have to draw yourself), and a whole out-

line is based on Tolkien's "double plot" strategy: evil is opposed both by open warfare of the Aragorn type, and by secret penetration by a single character aiming to destroy a source of magic power. One can see that the "map-and-pick-up" style of adventure games is conditioned by computer technology; the role-playing streak may also be inevitable. But why have the Tolkien derivatives got such a hold? And what does this tell us about fiction?

One thought is that the Tolkien books may have had hidden virtues just as narrative. The Hobbit as a book converts with curious ease to a computer game. It was, in a way, a "map-and-pick-up" book! Bilbo found the trolls' key, which opened the trolls' cave, which gave him Sting, which he needed for the spiders. He also had the ring, while Gandalf had the map, and Thorin had the other key, and Bard had the arrow. There were mazes and riddles and dead-ends and dungeons. It's true that Tolkien disliked electronics and had no idea about computers. Still, maybe there are laws of pace, of economy and of linearity, which he unconsciously obeyed and which are now being experimentally rediscovered. They are more obvious in computer games because of the games'

All is but toys

Julia Briggs

Notoriously unlucky, *Macbeth* has the doubtful honour of being the first Shakespeare play to be turned into a computer game; the pursuit of goblins through Athenian woods and ghosts over Elsinore's battlements must soon follow. Oxford Digital Enterprises have produced four adventure games inspired by the play, interspersed with question-and-answer sessions that tackle the nitty-gritty of character and motivation, thus ballasting entertainment with education. A text of the play is also provided, with notes intended to reassure those who hold Shakespeare and his well-intentioned advocates in suspicion. The obvious target is the schoolchild creeping like snail unwillingly towards O level, but the games are amusing and ingenious, while the knowledge of the play is at least as important as a knowledge of how computer adventure games work. Inevitably they illuminate some of the play's more forgettable moments along the way - you will need to know who Sweno was and what he was doing on St Colme's Inch. Odd bits of seventeenth-century folklore are dotted about among jokes as whimsy as any sporran, and if the games never attempt to capture the dark fatality of the original, they provide a lively literary quiz complete with sound and pictures.

The program begins with a thunderclap and a brilliantly animated sequence of graphics to illustrate the first scene. Three black shapes shift continually in a bleak landscape until they finally resolve their formlessness into paddock, cat and owl. The player must now be Macbeth, and dispose first of a mounted gallowglass, then of Macdonwald, in suitably Shakespearean style. The graphics adjust in response to the correct instructions, and Macdonwald's head can be placed on the battlements, where it drips fitfully, if not fearfully. A number of rather less plausible actions must then be carried out if you are to reach the heath with Banquo and receive the witches' all-hail. Much lateral thinking is called for, and more patience, since a program written for a home computer is necessarily limited in vocabulary and syntax; the inventors of *Macbeth* have used nearly every byte of available memory in their efforts to include as much Shakespearean vocabulary as possible, but the machine finds verbal richness and variety indigestible. Putting Shakespeare into computerspeak invites Johnson's comment, "It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

Each game is drawn from a different section of the play; the third sets the player to collect the less gruesome ingredients of the witches' cauldron (birth-strangled babes and blaspheming Jews are tactfully omitted). This is played out against a sequence of different locations, with some of the objects needed forming part of the pictures themselves; as in old-fashioned puzzle books (find the hidden key, or whatever): Here yew berries must be picked in the moon's eclipse, root of hemlock dugged in the

complete lack (in two senses) of "point". They have no moral; whereas *The Lord of the Rings* by contrast was perfectly obviously "all about" power and responsibility. They also have no "point" in the medieval or Chaucerian sense, meaning "telling detail", facts narrated for their own sake, verisimilitude at the expense of utility. By contrast again *The Lord of the Rings* was full of strictly-speaking redundant vignettes. Critics naturally concentrate on significance and depth, as the novelistic tradition has taught us. Beneath both, though, there is an appeal in raw event. Tolkien had this, and the game-creators recognize it. It is something they are contracted to supply, and for it we have almost no critical vocabulary at all.

Lords of Midnight (Beyond. £9.95. 48K Spectrum), *Penetrator* (Melbourne House. £6.95. 48K Spectrum), *Shadowfax* (Postern. BBC), *Atic Atic* (Ultimate. £5.50. 48K Spectrum), *Twin Kingdom Valley* (Bug-byte. £7.95. Commodore 64, BBC. 48K Spectrum), *Flight from the Dark* (Sparrow Books. £1.50, and Five Ways Software. £6.95. 48K Spectrum), *The Hobbit* (Melbourne House. £14.95. 48K Spectrum).

dark, and fenny snakes, owlets and newts retrieved from their habitats in various unexpected ways.

The second and fourth games are altogether more dramatic, since they are played against the clock, and their actions are rather more consonant with those of the play. For though the computer adventure partakes of the secret, mysterious and riddling nature of the witches as the proverbially open book cannot, the sinister atmosphere, the sense of nightmare and the ascendancy of darkness are not easily reproduced on the bright screen, amidst jokey asides. Yet these two games do suggest something of the hectic activity that flares up, to be succeeded within the play itself by horror or languor. In the second, the player as Lady Macbeth must find her way through the contrived corridors of Inverness Castle to locate instructions and ingredients for the stirrup-cup to welcome Duncan, then feed him, drug the guards, and finally perform the murder, all within an hour. Creaking floorboards, a regaleant mandrake, Angus and Ross wandering at random about the castle, and Macbeth's last-minute hesitations all make the task more difficult. One feels the force of "twere well it were done quickly". The last game finds Macbeth defending Dunsinane against the invaders, aided only by Seyton. After reading Dr Finlay's journal for Lady Macbeth's medical notes, hanging out banners, tossing a caber, and assembling the bagpipes to play "Auld Lang Syne" ("That was awful. You're out of practise", comments the computer) you may yet save yourself if your nerves are still sufficiently steady to type in the right instructions. . . . The hemeunetics of the computer game, after all, are irreconcilable with traditional literary forms. Only one route leads out of the silicon maze, and most of the time we are following the wrong clues.

Similar home truisms turn up in the question-and-answer sessions that alternate with the games. Here a certain Sigmund F. cross-questions Macbeth and his lady in an attempt to define their nature and motives. Inevitably these interrogations smack of the old "how-many-children-had-Lady-Macbeth" chestnut, treating the characters as real people rather than walking shadows, poor puppets awaiting the decision of individual actors to animate them. At the same time they consistently direct attention to the play's central problems, several of which do lie in the nature of the inconsistencies they reveal. Ultimately the mechanical character of computer games cannot accommodate the organic genius of the play; but as a man of his time Shakespeare would at least have acknowledged the prescription of *duice at ulle* that underwrites this attempt. And *Macbeth* ranks as one of the most varied, inventive and original computer games yet written.

Macbeth is marketed by Creative Sparks (Thom-EMI) for the Commodore 64, at £14.95.

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Not many months ago, I employed the expression "Promethean" in the course of an article for a respectable American magazine. One of the editors telephoned me to go over the piece. In the course of the conversation, he asked politely what the word "Promethean" might mean. I had a similar experience, shortly afterwards and with another paper no less reputable, when I used the term "Gadarene". In both instances, the editors confessed their own ignorance rather than (as happens occasionally) taking refuge in the claim that "the customers won't get it". In both instances, they were persuaded to look it up and to agree that a common synonym would be hard to come by. In both instances, I had used the terms in a rather obvious and even hackneyed manner. I have never related the story to any American university professor and been greeted with even the smallest surprise (except in one admittedly isolated case where the professor inquired the meaning of the word "Gadarene").

Now comes a report from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which states quite plainly that the teaching of the most elementary "civilization" has all but disappeared from the campus. Academics have been complaining for ages that they cannot make the simplest assumptions about what their students "know", and the NEH study gives some idea of why this must be. It has become possible to graduate from 72 per cent of colleges and universities here without having studied American literature or history, from 75 per cent without having studied European history, and from 86 per cent without having considered Greek or Roman antiquity. The liberal arts, to coin a phrase, are becoming extinct.

The report was written by William J. Bennett, chairman of the government-funded Endowment, and early copies became available late last month. The statistical indexes are only

a part of the story, but they are an impressive part. Graduates in English have declined by 57 per cent since 1970, in philosophy by 41 per cent over the same period, and in history by an astonishing 62 per cent. At the same time, the total number of degrees awarded rose by 11 per cent. It is no exaggeration, then, for the NEH report to say that students are graduating while "lacking even the most rudimentary knowledge about the history, literature, art, and philosophical foundations of their nation and their civilization".

The report blames the abysmal decline on the dissolution of the curriculum in the 1960s, and the subsequent claims of specialization and competitive inter-college "marketing". This allotment suggests that the deadly requirement of "even-handedness" is at work. The mass production of semi-literacy can hardly be blamed on a decades-old political turmoil about "content", and Mr Bennett himself uses the hideous phrase "vocational payoff" (hardly a 1960s concern) to identify what is warped in today's priorities. Indeed, while we're on the subject, his own prose gives little ground for optimism: "The humanities must not be argued for as something that will make our students refined, nor should the humanities be presented as a nonrigorous interlude where the young can chew over their feelings, emotive, or refresh their opinions." The recommendations of his report (based, inevitably, on the work of a huge and cumbersome "study group") do not exactly soar to the empyrean—whatever that is—either. For example: "Colleges and universities must reward excellent teaching in hiring, promotion and tenure decisions." Rather lamely, the study suggests a new and better reading list, ranging from Homer through Dante to Dickens, Marx, T. S. Eliot, the Gettysburg Address and concluding winedly with "such authors as Hawthorne, Melville, Twain and Faulkner". Yet, as Walter Jackson Bate put it recently, "The subject matter—the world's great literature—is unrivaled. All we need is the chance and the imagination to help it work upon the minds and characters of the

millions of students to whom we are responsible."

Still, Bennett and his team are obviously on to something. There must be a connection between the eclipse of humanities teaching and the number of sub-literate or semi-educated letters one gets from people signing themselves PhD; between the decline of English studies and the seeming inability of public persons to make a coherent speech; between all this and the humdrum style of the press, the jargon of the bureaucracy and the cheerful, bottomless ignorance to be encountered when making campus speaking tours. Nor is there any reason for non-Americans to be smug or patronizing: the United States is suffering from an extreme form of a general blight. Mr Bennett refers judiciously, as he is bound to do, to Matthew Arnold. He ends with a rather good near-tautology from Walter Lippman. "What enables men to know more than their ancestors is that they start with a knowledge of what their ancestors have already learned. . . . A society can be progressive only if it can conserve its tradition." There's something for everybody there, which I dimly suspect may have been part of the problem to begin with.

...

American culture still has the resilience to contest the meretricious and the homogenized. To read the dust-jackets of most books, or to see the placards of most plays and films, is to have the impression that every production is as good as any other. For a long time, critics have put up with the abuse of their names, and the names of their publications, by hucksters and opportunists. Now, all of a sudden, there are signs of a resistance to this omnivorous filching and puffing. It began, as far as I can discover, when a theatre critic (I think Frank Rich of the *New York Times*) sued a playhouse which had misused his name and his review. It wasn't that the theatre had selected only his complimentary sentences. It was that the management had filleted the notice, which was an unequivocal condemnation, and had strung together words such as "tremendous", as in "with tremendous disgust", or "great" as in "great was my relief at the curtain's fall". (I paraphrase only slightly.)

Litigation is properly repulsive to those who live by writing, but the mangling of critics and reviewers has now reached a stage where it amounts to the stealing of good names as well as to a fraud on the public. Simon and Schuster, for example, is a supposedly serious publisher. It put out Shirley Conran's *Lace*, even so. That might be forgiven. What cannot be excused is the placing of a newspaper advertisement which quoted Jonathan Yardley of the *Washington Post* as saying "It soars". Yardley had written, rather heavily-handedly perhaps, that *Lace* "soars into the same stratosphere where you'll find *Valley of the Dolls*".

Harper and Row recently gave damages and an apology to Henry Mayer for editing and misappropriating 250 words of his critical review, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, of a biography of Dorothy Day, Jessica Mitford, who was sent an advance copy of an aviation disaster book, wrote a blurb saying that she found it "totally absorbing". The publisher wrote back asking that she say instead "meticulously researched" (which I would say was her fault for writing "totally absorbing" in the first place). Ms Mitford still had the crust to write back to the publisher suggesting an all-purpose

check-list of permissible phrases for blurb donors.

Publishers' Weekly, which has done a certain amount to forward this kind of protest, has drawn some useful examples into its correspondence columns. Walter Berkov, the literary editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, was surprised to see an advertisement in the *New York Times Book Review*, crediting his pages with the opinion that a potboiler on the Kennedy family was "definitive". No such word has ever appeared. It turned out on investigation that a luncheon, sponsored by the *Plain Dealer's* promotion department, had described the book as such on its menu. The offending publisher in this case was McGraw-Hill.

Enough. Relations between the review mill and the publishing industry are much too warm and rotten as it is. Two remedies suggest themselves. The first is that no reviewer should use any of the stale words or phrases ("stunning", "gripping", "absorbing", anything "totally" or "utterly") which lend themselves to cheap promotions. When Bertie Wooster was asked, by Ginger Winship, if he had read Florence Craye's *Spindrift* he replied, "I couldn't put it down", cunningly not revealing that I hadn't been able to take it up." Authors and reviewers who care for standards should pose themselves above this kind of guile, should protest angrily when their work is poached and disguised, and should, when invited to contribute inexpensive tripe to dust-jackets, send off a facsimile of the card which begins, "Mr Edmund Wilson regrets . . .".

...

I knew one or two things to the discredit of the Pulitzer Prize Committee before now (awards for fictitious newspaper articles; commendations for ludicrous novels; jobbery and mediocrity all around—the usual attendants of the prize-giving business). But I did not know until recently that publishers had to pay a fee to enter their books or authors in this caucus race. The fee is only \$20 per title but Random House, for example, has 750 titles this year and some publishers have more. Thus, it is the publishing houses themselves who act, by culling the books which will be entered, as the first jury.

Roger Straus, President of Farrar, Straus, Giroux, is so far the only publisher to have objected publicly. Others feel, and say, that the Pulitzer stipulation is indefensible. But such is the mesmeric power of the prize that few dare to risk giving offence. When it is recalled that the Pulitzer Foundation was established as a tax-exempt concern, the practice of charging a fee for its consideration can be seen for what it is—a loading of the odds. Many of the very small presses simply cannot compete on these terms. And there seems to be an issue of principle here. As Farrar, Straus wrote to me:

What comes next? Will literary prizes in the U.S. become the sole property of well-budgeted books and publishers? And will other well-endowed foundations established to perpetuate and honour the name of wealthy donors take a lesson from the Pulitzer Foundation?

Frankly, I don't believe that the public has ever doubted that the answer to the second question is yes. But it is noteworthy, and commendable, that one publisher in a position to exploit the situation has decided instead to protest about it.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 204
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 4. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.

Editorial, marked "Author, Author 204" on this envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. Failure spreading back up the arm.
Earlier said earlier, the unraveled head calm.
The apple within the palm.

2. The marginally dry leg.
Emerging from a sudden, crest of water.
That does itself up like a beaded wound.
Upward, glancing with careless arrogance.
His throaty, bold, in the highest board.
I come of France, in the moonlit, alone.
Reaching the back, in the wild, in the

3. The river comes pouring in above the city
and crashes from the edge of the gorge
in a recall of spray and rainbow light.
William Carlos Williams, *Poems*

To end up in a draughty lampit station
After the trains have gone:
Competition No 200
Winner: W. H. Milner
Answer:

1. A land of streams, some like a downward
mule.
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go
And some through wavering lights and shadow
broke.

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below
Lord Tennyson, "The Lotus-Eaters"

2. A fracture in the vapour.
A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.

William Wordsworth, "The Prelude" (1805)
3. The river comes pouring in above the city
and crashes from the edge of the gorge
in a recall of spray and rainbow light.
William Carlos Williams, *Poems*

Letters

Freud and the Seduction Theory

Sir, — Jeffrey M. Masson (Letters, November 16) points out "two errors, both serious", in my review of his book *The Assault on Truth*. The first is to do with Ernest Jones's account of Freud's paedophilic dream. In my review I said that Freud's conviction of the reality of the seduction was bolstered by his recognition of his own paedophilic impulses as manifested in a dream of sex play with his nine-year-old daughter, a dream that Jones misrepresents as being about Freud's niece Hella. This is what Freud says: "Not long ago I dreamt that I was feeling over-affectionately towards Mathilde, but her name was Hella." According to Masson, this is exactly what Jones says. This is what Jones says: "He had a dream about his American niece Hella which he had to interpret as covering a sexual wish towards his daughter."

If Masson thinks that what Jones says "is exactly what Freud says", then Masson has not exactly grasped the difference between the manifest and the latent content of a dream.

As part of a general case against the trustworthiness of Freud's later accounts of the seduction error, I called attention to the discrepancy between Freud's original remarks and those made in the 1914 "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement", in which Freud says, according to Strachey, that "patients ascribed their symptoms to passive sexual experiences in early childhood". Masson claims that "Freud never said anything like what Strachey translates". This is what Freud said: "Unter dem Einfluss der an Charcot anknüpfenden traumatischen Theorie der Hysterie war man leicht geneigt, Berichte der Kranken für real und ätiologisch bedeutsam zu halten, welche ihre Symptome auf passive sexuelle Erlebnisse in den ersten Kinderjahren, also grob ausgedrückt: auf Verführung zurückleiteten."

Let us suppose for the moment that Masson is right and that it is Freud, not the patients, who attribute their symptoms to passive sexual experiences. Since it is still the case that Freud has his patients reporting seductions in this passage, but in the earlier one says, "they have no feeling of recalling those scenes" and "assure me emphatically of their unbelief", what makes Masson think his emendation of Strachey has shown that "Freud was not saying anything misleading"?

But is Masson's emendation correct? Neither the Germanists nor the Germans I have consulted agree that "what Freud wrote is nothing like what Strachey translated". They found the sentence ambiguous; a view which has the advantage over Masson's that it at least renders it explicable why Strachey should have translated it as he did. But there is another consideration which sheds even more light on Strachey's version of the sentence (and also incidentally exposes the shabbiness of Masson's procedure). About half-a-dozen sentences along, in the same paragraph, Freud states unequivocally the view Strachey attributed to him: "hysterics trace their symptoms to fictitious traumas." Strachey probably resolved the ambiguity of the original sentence by reading into it the sense of the later. Why does Masson suppress mention of this later sentence? Whatever his reason, it is plain that he has not disposed of the contradiction to which I called attention.

But I wouldn't wish to leave the impression that the case against the reliability of Freud's accounts of the seduction episode rests on one quotation, however unequivocal. It rests, like a good psychoanalytic interpretation, on a wide range of data with varying degrees of cogency. (I advanced some of these in a Radio Three talk, "Was Freud a Liar?", versions of which were published in the *Listener* February 7, 1974, and in the *Journal of Orthomolecular Psychiatry*, Spring 1976.)

Masson also reproaches me for wantonly accusing Freud of bad faith. I cannot allow Masson to attempt to ingratiate himself with his former colleagues at my expense by coming forward as a champion of Freud's rectitude against my irresponsible slurs. As an example of Masson's own restraint in making accusations of bad faith consider his comment on Freud's seduction theory:

"His . . . patients were telling him the truth. The lies came from Freud" (p187). Masson's thesis that Freud willfully suppressed the fact that he was dealing with real seductions leaves his behaviour completely unmotivated. Whereas it is obvious why Freud would wish to conceal the extent to which he anticipated the seduction patients' "memories" and the discretion he employed in interpreting them.

Masson still insists on the relevance of his research into the extent of child abuse to Freud's seduction theory. In his book he finds it "puzzling" that Freud did not invoke the researches of Bernard and Tardieu as "support for his new and unpopular theories". But were the sadistically abused children who figured in the reports of Bernard and Tardieu suffering from hysterical or obsessional symptoms? Were they amnesic for the sufferings they had undergone? (And I dislike and distrust the gratuitous circumstantiality with which Masson reports these horrors.) Since neither is the case, what bearing could they have on Freud's preoccupations?

Finally, Masson tells us that he has learned a lot of languages and done a lot of reading. But I never questioned his industriousness, only his understanding and his disinterestedness, and on neither point has his letter reassured me. FRANK CIOFFI, Department of Philosophy, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester.

Plato and Lesbianism

Sir, — I write again about Anacreon's poem on falling for a girl from Lesbos because two people have pointed out to me that their copies of the *Oxford Book of Greek Verse* (1930) had an emendation in the last line of the poem: it read not (as in the 1951 reprint that I know) "she gapes [erotically] for another [feminine]", which is the correct ancient reading, but "for another [masculine]", the difference of a single vowel. But since Higham and Quasimodo were both translating this adulterated text, I must withdraw my strictures on their work. However, the fact that modern scholars have been emending the text in this way does add weight to my contention that the poem is about a Lesbian in the modern sense as well as in the ancient sense (ie, simply a person from the island of Lesbos).

David Bain (Letters, November 23) agrees with my reading of the poem, but takes issue with me on one of the points made in my final incidental words. I mentioned the verb *Lesbiazo*, saying that it didn't mean doing what Lesbians now do, but what women "generally" did to men, having got the idea from research by women on women on Lesbos. The statement itself is plain enough (though Mr Bain gets technical about it), but it includes a bit of pop etymology which Mr Bain professes not to understand. It still seems to me, though, a not unintelligible attempt to explain a word by joining two commonplaces ("on Lesbos the women buzz buzz" and "please lesbian me"). After all, *lesbiazo* must have something to do with Lesbos. But, not being a scholar but a poet, I seem to have let my tongue run away with me.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT, 27 Hawthorn Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Cambodian History

Sir, — I was pleased that Ralph Smith should draw attention to one of the major purposes of my book, *Cambodia 1975-1982*, namely, the demonstration of Cambodia's complexity. The issue in which his letter appears (October 26) reached me here as I am attempting to discover more details of that complexity. In part through examination of the Tuol Sleng prison records to which the same generous access as in recent years is still being granted.

Anthony Barnett (September 14) was also correct in emphasizing the provocative tone of my book, which was deliberate and intended to force the reader to consider issues which have been obscured elsewhere.

Mr Smith is again correct in his criticism of Barnett's juxtaposition of David Chandler's soothing style with my polemics. Given the very different subject matter of our books, the contrast, even though true, is irrelevant.

I do not agree with Smith, however, in his assessment of Chandler's book. Only the chapters on the Angkor period, leading to the thir-

teenth century, are based on "predominantly French" research. For the period from the fifteenth century to the present day French historical writing on Cambodia has not been outstanding, and Chandler's chapters rely largely on his own research in Cambodian and Thai sources.

The Islamic king should have received mention, admittedly, but having read virtually all of the extant indigenous records for his reign, I feel confident in stating that very little other than speculation may be offered about its significance and that the problem there, as in all of the history of fourteenth to seventeenth-century Cambodia, is indeed inadequacy of sources and, in most pre-1970 scholarship, inadequate attention to those sources which are available.

MICHAEL VICKERY, Hotel Monorom, Phnom Penh.

McKim, Mead and White

Sir, — In his review of *McKim, Mead and White, Architects* by Leland M. Roth (November 23), Andrew Saint tells us that Louis Kahn "had the taste to die" in McKim's Pennsylvania Station "before it could be demolished". This is not so. The Old Pennsylvania Station was demolished in 1963. Kahn died in 1974 in the new Penn Station, built over the bowels of McKim's original.

In a sense, Pennsylvania Station did not die in vain. The outrage following its demolition led New York City to adopt a Landmarks Preservation law in 1965, which will no doubt save a good many more McKim, Mead and White buildings from destruction.

Ironically, the new Penn Station is also the site of the fourth Madison Square Garden: White's famous palace of amusement, the second to bear that name, was demolished in 1925.

JAMES HEILBRUN, Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458.

'This Real Night'

Sir, — I am a little surprised that Michael Sisones (Letters, November 23), unable to confirm or have his theory denied, should convince himself that Macmillan took fright at the 1,129 pages of a novel submitted by Rebecca West in 1956, and persuaded her to cut it almost exactly in half, publishing the first half as *The Fountain Overflows*, and offering her a contract for a trilogy.

I was the director responsible for general publishing at Macmillan at that time. Dame Rebecca was an old friend who had welcomed my joining Macmillan in 1939. She was then published by Cape, but had contracted with Macmillan for a short book in a travel series. This was to grow into *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), a book of over 800 pages. So much for the charge of taking fright at length.

The Fountain Overflows was submitted under that title in 1956. This fact is easily ascertainable by reference to the Macmillan Manuscript Registry and the Letter-Books of the period, presumably both available in the Macmillan Archives in the British Library. Dame Rebecca told both Ben Heubach of Viking and me that a second novel was in nearly complete form, but could not be published at that time for family reasons. She and I were to return to this subject many times in the next ten years. It was she, not her publishers, who was responsible for the long delay in the publication of *This Real Night*. My conclusion long ago was that she did not want anyone to see a work with which she was not satisfied, and her own critical judgment, not family reasons, explains a misgiving which Patricia Craig's review in this same number would seem to justify.

LOVAT DICKSON, Apartment 808, 21 Dale Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

Library Services

Sir, — With regard to the standard of service offered by the British Library, it is said that if Karl Marx had been provided with all the books that he ordered, *Das Kapital* would have been a very different book. Shortcomings in the services offered by the Bibliothèque Nationale seem trivial by comparison.

DAVID BLOW, 12 Gordon Mansions, Torrington Place, London WC1.

The Oxford Authors

Sir, — I am glad to learn from Frank Kermode's letter (November 16) that the Oxford Authors will eventually include more than the five already published and the fifteen or so in prospect.

I cannot agree with Nicolas Walter (Letters, November 30) that *Gulliver's Travels* does not need explanatory notes, though I agree they should not be obtrusive. I do not understand why he was astonished by my saying that, apart from *Gulliver*, "Swift was mainly a pamphleteer and most of his writings in prose and verse were written to serve an immediate purpose; except to the historian, his subjects are no longer of importance." Mr Walter objects, citing the *Modest Proposal*. I agree about that, and I would also cite the *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*. But taken together these tracts occupy only about eighteen pages of the Oxford Authors text (out of 604). And even they may require elucidation by reference to their context of origin. Mr Walter says that a live broadcast of the *Modest Proposal* on Irish television had to be stopped because of the reactions of the studio audience. I do not know the details of this incident, but perhaps the audience misunderstood the purpose of the work. A brief historical introduction might have helped them.

W.W. ROBSON, Department of English Literature, University of Edinburgh, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh.

Sir, — As one of the editors of the *Swift* volume in the new Oxford Authors series, perhaps I may be able to provide Nicolas Walter with some of the "proper guidance" which he says (Letters, November 30) potential purchasers, at least of this volume, need. His letter contains the second adverse comment in your pages on the omission of *Gulliver's Travels* from the Oxford Authors volume, and like W. W. Robson's review (October 26) lacks any serious mention of the reason for this, namely, the volume's actual scope and content.

Both Mr Walter and Professor Robson compare the Oxford Authors selection unfavourably with John Hayward's *Nonesuch Swift* volume, published half a century ago. The *Nonesuch* accommodates the one hundred and fifty thousand words of *Gulliver's Travels* by cutting Swift's companion masterpiece, *A Tale of a Tub*, to four of the Digressions and three other snippets; by similarly eviscerating *The Conduct of the Allies*, even though the editor himself declares that, "whether judged on its own merit, or by the profound effect it produced on public opinion, [it] is probably the most famous political pamphlet in the English language"; by including only fifteen poems; and by a "more regrettable omission", that of the Bickerstaff papers. The scanty representation of Swift's writing forced by allowing more than a third of the space to the *Travels*, now freely available at very little cost, is hardly compensated for by placing among its twenty prose pieces two works not by Swift. All other selections in print similarly imprison Swift in the pages left after including the *Travels*. Is he to be condemned to this treatment in perpetuity?

Among its more than sixty titles, the Oxford Authors *Swift* includes *A Tale of a Tub* and its accompanying pieces complete. It contains *The Conduct of the Allies* complete, in the belief that some readers may like to know something of historical events as they actually happened and were argued over; it also offers thirty poems. It provides a substantial representation of Swift's Irish pieces, and in addition fifteen of his incomparable letters. The "dignified austerity" of the *Nonesuch* volume is attractive, but it also entails some disadvantages. No help is given to the enquiring reader who may not be disposed to believe Hayward's reiterated opinions, apparently also the source of Robson's views, about what is "no longer of general interest" or "no longer important except to the historian".

ANGUS ROSS, School of English and American Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton.

The author of "Ambivalence and Dedication", referred to by Christopher Driver in his review of Callan and Ardener's *The Incorporated Wife* (November 4), is Lidia Stachiw.

so much so that critics tend to describe their motives and actions—wrongly, it seems to me—in terms of modern psychology.

The interesting question here is why Martorell should have wanted to make Tirant into a more complex character and how he actually achieves this. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Tirant is that he is a hero conceived on a human scale, one who at various points is made to acknowledge his human limitations. It is this "humanizing" which contrasts most strongly with earlier romance: a difference which is relatively easy to convey at the public level but which has much deeper consequences in the context of love. In terms of chivalry, of course, there is no incompatibility between love and war: what Martorell shows, however, is what in the novels of chivalry usually remains implicit: the connection between the battlefield and the bedchamber, and the literal side of the love-war metaphor. This accounts for a number of scenes which can only be described as sexual farce, as when Carmesina's lady-in-waiting, Pleasure-of-my-life, manages to get Tirant into the bed where Carmesina is asleep: Tirant's head was on his lady's belly, and Pleasure-

of-my-life's was on his head. When she saw her mistress dozing off, she relaxed her grip and Tirant fell where he liked, but when the princess moved, Pleasure-of-my-life gripped his head and he kept still. This game lasted for more than an hour. To overlook such passages, or to play them down, would be to give a one-sided account of the novel. When one reads them in their context, one finds that as a rule they are very carefully placed: this particular episode comes just before Tirant's career reaches one of its lowest points; at this stage, there is a strong suspicion that Tirant's love for Carmesina is making him neglect his military duties, and at the end of the scene he is surprised and breaks his leg in escaping from the palace. And the final insult to his pride comes when his friends hear him crying out in pain and mistake his voice for a woman's.

Nevertheless, despite what seems an unusual degree of sexual frankness, Tirant and Carmesina do not actually consummate their love until almost the end of the novel, and the way this suspense is achieved tells us a good deal about Martorell's intentions. It is clear that the two main characters are passionately in love with one another from an early stage. It

is also true that Carmesina from time to time encourages Tirant, only to draw back at the last moment; yet to describe her behaviour as "coquettish", as critics have sometimes done, seems wrong: on the one hand, it mistakes the nature of Martorell's desire for verisimilitude, and on the other, it implies too "modern" a view of character and motivation. In practice, the two points are connected: though he is concerned to make the action as plausible as possible, Martorell is never an "omniscient narrator" in the sense of an analyst of what is going on in the minds of his characters. All through the novel, in fact, characterization hardly seems to be assisted either by direct self-revelation or by authorial intervention. What does assist it—and this is surely one of the great triumphs of the *Tirant*—is Martorell's skill in exploiting less direct forms of disclosure: dream narrations, actions and gestures, and certain less formal kinds of discourse.

The effect of this is to create an illusion of depth without actually entering into the minds of the characters. Often this is achieved by suggesting conflicting motives: the tension between duty and desire, and also the suspicion that certain lies may have a basis in truth. Moreover, at several points in the book Martorell makes one of his characters tell a "story" which goes beyond the strict needs of the situation. Thus in the "secret marriages" episode, Pleasure-of-my-life secretly witnesses the love-making of the two couples and later recounts what she has seen in the form of a "dream". Not only this, she describes her own reactions: she was so literally "inflamed" by what she saw and heard, she says, that she had to pour cold water over herself and later was unable to sleep for thinking of what she had witnessed. Clearly, Pleasure-of-my-life's involvement adds to the erotic atmosphere of the incident and there is a strong suggestion that her voyeurism and her interest in arranging other people's affairs represent a kind of loving by proxy. However, one cannot be sure of this: the forces at work include not only her description of her immediate feelings, but also the whole set of emotions which lies behind her desire to tell all this to the lovers.

In such instances, Martorell's technique is to create a shadowy area of meaning in which a particular character—more often than not, Tirant himself—comes to seem less certain and possibly more complex. This raises the question of consistency: in what sense, if at all, are Tirant and Carmesina consistent characters, and, if they are, what are the implications for the novel as a whole? And here one comes back to the comment from *Don Quixote* quoted earlier. This goes on:

For all that, I tell you that the man who composed it [the *Tirant lo Blanch*] deserved to be sent to the galleys for the rest of his life, because he did not perpetrate all those absurdities in a calculated manner.

Cervantes's point, that is to say, is criticizing Martorell for not knowing what he was doing, for writing without clarity of purpose. Yet what this comment ultimately reveals, surely, is the gap which separates medieval and Renaissance conceptions of verisimilitude. Though he is the greater artist, there is no doubt that Cervantes's sense of decorum—of what can be convincingly represented in fiction—is narrower than Martorell's. This is where it can be misleading to praise the *Tirant* for its "modernity", as recent critics tend to do; though, on the sur-

face, Martorell's technique often seems surprisingly modern, and though one is inclined to use modern critical concepts to describe its effects, it is also clear that Martorell is a man of his times, and that the kind of things which offended Cervantes would scarcely have surprised a fifteenth-century reader. One could argue, in fact, that it is possible to regard Tirant as a consistent character precisely because Martorell has been so careful to place his moments of sexual comedy in relation to the whole. And if anything surprised a fifteenth-century audience, it would probably have been the inclusive nature of this whole, rather than any dissonance between its parts.

This is where the problem of characterization impinges on the whole question of Martorell's intentions in writing the *Tirant*. Though independent evidence is hard to come by, it seems likely that in describing the court of Constantine, Martorell is really re-creating his own society at a time when certain aspects of contemporary culture were coming to meet his imagination half-way. We know, for instance, that in fifteenth-century Spain, as in other European countries at the time, there was a revival both of troubadour poetry and of the ideals of chivalry. Though recent scholars tend to regard this whole movement as a form of archaism or at best a way of concealing insoluble contradictions between social theory and social reality, it is possible to see the *Tirant* as a serious attempt to imagine the kind of resolution which such a situation would require. One thing at least seems certain: Martorell wishes not to disperse the ideals of chivalry, only to explore their relation to the world he knows, and the whole thrust of his temperament, one may feel, leads him to reinvent this world in order to demonstrate the imaginative truth of chivalry to a society whose values are becoming progressively less aristocratic. Thus, however much he demythifies the courtly ethos by admitting that in real life people often behave in a quite uncourtly way, he assumes that the myths themselves still have the strength to serve as official models of behaviour. There is nothing subversive about his burlesque effects, nor, for the most part, any note of censure—simply a good-humoured recognition of the part played by animal spirits in human affairs. Similarly, his way of regarding the chivalry to which he was temperamentally attached involves neither nostalgia nor iconoclasm, but rather a brilliantly imaginative attempt to bridge the widening gap between the chivalresque code and the realities of social practice. More striking still, there is nothing openly didactic about this attempt: what resolution there is lies in the unity of the fiction itself and in the comprehensiveness of the perspectives it embodies.

It goes without saying that none of these perspectives is the "right" one, and it is surely one of the achievements of the *Tirant* that, like other great novels, it draws its readers into an endlessly ramifying process of discrimination. Coming two years after Pamela Wormald's excellent version of *Curtal I Gelfa* (TLS, February 25, 1983), the other major Catalan contribution to the chivalresque romance, this first English translation of the *Tirant* is doubly welcome, both as a fascinating piece of storytelling in itself and as further evidence of a rich and genuinely European culture whose best productions have lost none of their original power.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of December 13, 1934, carried a review of Vienna by Stephen Spender. Mr. Spender's new long poem is an attempt to cope imaginatively with political events. He has been moved, it seems, to a mixture of anger and pity and (in conclusion) universal affection by the suppression of the Austrian Socialists by Dollfus in February. His technical difficulties are the obvious ones: the statement of political questions, as—

What we made almost free,
Rent, rates, gas, the price of electricity
They loaded with taxes, then publicly blamed us.
And at the same time blamed our delinquent novels.

The defect here is not, as might be easily objected, the choice of "integrable" material. It is rather a purely representational tendency to which Mr. Spender at intervals succumbs. The passage above is undeniably pondered; the artistic equivalent is a warbling

selected.

Mr. Spender's own position in the matter is hardly lucid. An apparent identification of himself with the Viennese workers arouses a faint scepticism in the mind of the reader, especially when it might seem that Mr. Spender is among the imprisoned, watching a leader's execution. We are led, on the whole, not only to pity for these Socialists, but also to a view of the poet himself in the act of being pitied: this poem reveals that Mr. Spender's charm is earlier poems; the readiness of his sympathetic response; which was very refreshing in a dry period, is also his danger. His occasional unselfish excess makes him a notable romantic. A too great sensibility of the sympathetic kind has been observed, "as even adverse to the higher kind of conduct that seeks to relieve pain and so promote happiness." And what would seem to be a somewhat parallel to this in the

A sense of community

M. T. Clanchy

SIRAN REYNOLDS
Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300
Oxford: Clarendon Press. £28.
019219555

This is a challenging book which all historians of medieval Europe and social theorists will have to come to terms with. Its argument is that the bonds of medieval society were horizontal rather than vertical. Feudalism is dismissed as a meaningless term, alien to the Middle Ages. Instead of the hierarchy of lord, vassal and tenant, Susan Reynolds emphasizes the ties of community which united people of disparate status into groups for mutual cooperation. Such collectivities had many names: communes, companies, consortia, estates, fraternities, guilds and others. She argues that such names had little significance in themselves and were not mutually exclusive. Communes and guilds for example did not exist solely in towns and still less were they restricted to the cities of "progressive" areas, like Flanders and Lombardy, where bourgeois capitalism first, according to classical Marxist theory, developed.

Communities are described at each level of social organization in a series of chapters, starting at the bottom with "the community of the parish" and moving through "villages and rural neighbourhoods", "urban communities" and "provinces and lordships" up to "the community of the realm" at the top. As communal activity was a fundamental commonplace of

medieval society, an individual might participate in a number of communities at different levels at the same time. The sense of community was not the monopoly of any particular class or region. Each chapter draws its examples from England, France, Germany and Italy in order to emphasize the similarities in social and political organization across Western Europe. The idea of the community of the realm was not something specially English, as parliamentary historians have often assumed; neither was the civic community Italian, nor elective kingship German, nor the three estates French. Such assumptions were made, Dr Reynolds argues, because nationalist historians of the nineteenth century in particular wanted to think that their own medieval records were unique.

A glance at Stubbs's *Charters* confirms this: in the edition of 1895 he deliberately got rid of expressions "which belong more properly to French and German history". Students at Oxford, who were being nurtured to propagate British rule, must not come away with the subversive idea that the nations of Europe had once shared common institutions and values. Reynolds by contrast aims at a truly European history. She has read widely in French, German and Italian and her excellent bibliography and footnotes are an achievement in themselves. She is aware that even her wide range may be too narrow. Why exclude the Iberian kingdoms from Western Europe? In the history of medieval communities there really is anything special about England, France, Germany and Italy? All Latin Christendom should be considered and perhaps Greek and Slav Christendom as well. Within the British Isles

the book can similarly be criticized for saying little about Welsh or Irish communities, although Scotland is considered in the context of the Declaration of Arbroath.

To such criticisms Reynolds replies that her knowledge, including linguistic knowledge, is already stretched thin enough. A great strength of her work is that it is based on first-hand knowledge. She judges things for herself and she has a refreshing, jargon-free, way of writing. She has often read the medieval Latin source, as well as the modern literature concerning it. No one scholar could have done the same for the sources in a dozen other languages, which a comprehensive range would have required. As it is, the exposition sometimes suffers from being too concise, where the ramifications of evidence cannot be discussed. The book's wide range also raises a doubt as to whether the types of collective organization it describes are distinctive to medieval Europe. The final statement, that the object of government was "to achieve a harmonious consensus in accordance with the custom and law of the whole community" applies equally to almost any "traditional" society.

Reynolds's approach is like that of a social anthropologist. She distrusts the received wisdom of the colonial officials (in the medieval field these are the clerics and academics learned in canon and Roman law) and searches instead for the testimony of the people themselves. This explains her emphasis on lay society and on secular, as opposed to ecclesiastical, records. There are pitfalls in methodology here, as the medieval distinction between cler-

Dark deeds in the twilight

Caroline Bingham

RONALD WILLIAMS
The Lords of the Isles: The Clan Donald and the early Kingdom of the Scots
Trop. Chatto and Windus/Hogarth Press.
212.95.
011122084

Romance is in the eye of the beholder, and Ronald Williams sees romance in the history of the Lordship of the Isles. He sees tragedy in the later history of the Western Highlands and Isles, deprived of the leadership of the chiefs of Clan Donald. Having expressed contempt for the artificial view of the Highlands which characterized the Celtic Revival of the early nineteenth century, he goes on to evoke his own vision of the past in terms which owe much to his inspiration:

Romantic sentiment suffuses the dark tragedy. The chieftains in their eagle plumes depart. The Gaelic battle banners die and fall, and ghoully captains lead their swordsmen back into the western mist. The coloured glads melt slowly into the autumn heather; the music of the pipes dies on the wind; and they have returned to that old world of Celtic twilight to which they first belonged.

In that old world some extremely unpleasant events took place. The opening chapters of Williams's book relate the earlier history of the Western Highlands and Isles, from the foundation of the Scottish Kingdom of Dal Riata in about 500 to the emergence of the Lordship of the Isles shortly after 1350. This section includes an account of the Norse occupation of the Western Isles and an entirely unnecessary chapter on the battle of Clontarf, fought in Ireland in 1014, which concludes with an implausible description of the brains of the High King Brian Boru dripping from his slayer's sword, and the subsequent execution of the latter by slow disembowelling. During the later years of Norwegian supremacy in the Isles (which were ceded to Scotland in 1266), Paganet MacTigart earl of Ross, invaded Skye in 1261, and King Hakon of Norway was told that "the Scots had taken the little children and laid them on their spear-points, and shook their spears until they brought the children down to their hands, and so threw them away dead".

After the establishment of the Lordship of the Isles the high level of violence continued. In 1411 the army of Donald, second Lord of the Isles, burned Aviemore, on route from the battle of Harlaw, in 1412, the third Lord, Alexander,

burned Inverness again; and in 1491 Alexander of Lochalsh, nephew of the fourth Lord, sacked Inverness "from force of habit", and went on to set fire to a church and burn alive the people who had crowded into it for sanctuary. The Lordship of the Isles was forfeited to the Scottish Crown two years later. In the twentieth century, when communities are destroyed and when people are tortured and massacred, the events are reported in their undisguised horror, and nobody supposes the perpetrators to be heroic warriors. Atrocities were equally horrible in the medieval centuries, and "Celtic twilight" cannot be permitted to shroud them in spurious romance.

Far more interesting than the catalogue of slaughter which the history of the Lordship of the Isles can easily become is the history of the learned and artistic professions which managed to flourish under its aegis. At least the Lordship provided a political focus for Gaelic civilization, and the Lords and their immediate ancestors gave personal patronage to its intellectuals, artists and craftsmen. The learned society of Gaelicdom was highly professionalized on a hereditary basis: both learning and position were passed on in certain families. There were dynasties of judges, doctors, historians, scribes and genealogists. The same system applied in arts and crafts: there were dynasties of musicians (the harp remained the favoured instrument of the Gael until the sixteenth century), of poets, sculptors, armourers and shipbuilders. Gaelic learning and art survived the fall of the Lordship of the Isles, living on throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some branches of learning, notably medicine, declined as a result of extreme traditionalism, and not as a result of the failure of political support. Poetry, on the other hand, fed upon political tribulation, continuing to flourish during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and drawing inspiration from the unhappy events of the Jacobite period.

Ronald Williams has written a clear account of the century and a half of the Lordship's existence, and he is remarkably lucid on the complex relationships within the Clan Donald. It is a pity that he gives so much more space to warriors than to scholars, artists and poets, because the history of the Lordship of the Isles suggests that there is little cause to lament the passing of the heroic society and much cause to regret the decline of the learned society. This history is not romantic, and its materials could provide much more than a superficial narrative of feud and warfare.

B. K. Davison

DAVID J. CATHCART KING
Castellarium Anglicanum: An index and bibliography of the castles in England, Wales and the Islands
Volume 1, Anglesey-Montgomery; Volume 2, Norfolk-Yorkshire and the Islands
576pp. New York: Kraus. \$150 the set.
0527501107

Ruined castles are perhaps the most evocative of all the vestiges of our past. It is David J. Cathcart King's achievement to have identified and briefly described this debris of a bygone age. Within these two volumes he has "captured" the castles of England and Wales. This capture-by-catalogue is in the best tradition of British antiquarian topography. Counting castles goes back to the ages which produced them. In the early thirteenth century Gervase of Canterbury listed ninety-nine; three centuries later, John Leland noted 450; by 1798 James Moore was able to refer to 530. The numbers rose, even as the castles themselves were razed. Now it seems likely that King has caught all, or virtually all, those which have survived until the later twentieth century.

It is not just the major castles which are noticed here, but every grassy hump likely to have once been a castle. King defines a castle as "a building of the Middle Ages (in England and Wales at least) which is seriously fortified". On this basis, he lists the major stone castles, the peel towers of Northern England, the fortified farmhouses known as "bastles" (in Cumberland and Northumberland only), town walls and fortified monasteries, as well as grass-grown earthworks. His *Castellarium* is thus a catalogue of medieval and early sixteenth-century fortification. The one category missing is the walled cathedral close. This is a pity, since closes were the symbolic castles of religious communities and as such often consciously adopted the style of "real" castles belonging to secular communities.

The catalogue, which runs to 553 pages, is grouped by county, and covers extant, vanished and possible fortified constructions; works inspected, but rejected as castles, are also noted. The entries are necessarily brief—just the name, location, history as recorded in contemporary sources, a few words of description and a bibliography. Thus, the Tower of London receives 280 words of description and thirty-two bibliographical references, whereas the small earthwork at "Whittington" has to

make do with ten words and a single reference. Such relentless brevity on occasion robs us of helpful, if subjective, detail. Thus, Castell Coch in Glamorgan was "much rebuilt in the 19th century". There is no indication that Burges's work for the Marquis of Bute made it one of the most romantic evocations of the Middle Ages to be found in Britain—a miniature Carcassonne. This is not, however, really a book for the intending visitor; rather it is an encyclopedic work of reference.

One purpose of any such work of reference must be to serve as a basis for constructive analysis. So what does King make of it all? His forty-five pages of introduction reveal a western view—from "Little England beyond Wales". Welsh castles were King's first love and for the most part these were strictly military works, whether built by the Welsh or the English. Nevertheless, as he himself points out, castles are linked with lordship. Barons with a high level of sub-infeudation had many lordships, and therefore many castles. The distribution of the castles thus reflects the patterns of tenancy as much as those of warfare.

King has no time for symbolism or conspicuous consumption as a motive for castle building, nor for the all-embracing domestic role of the castle. His military viewpoint, however, is difficult to sustain in many parts of lowland England. He could, perhaps have emulated more Mark Grouard's analysis of the Great House as a power-generating machine—the castle being merely the medieval faces of the Great House, fortified because society was largely held together by military links. Small, cut-rate, non-residential forts may have outnumbered the fortified mansions of the gentry, but they were marginal, even in the Middle Ages. It is because castles were homes, administrative centres, banks, courts and jails, as well as being forts, that they were so important.

David King's *Castellarium* is the result of a lifetime's dedication. Sadly, it may well be the last of its kind. In future, such catalogues are more likely to be found on magnetic tape than between hard covers. But it is a measure of the usefulness of these two volumes that one's immediate desire is to take scissors to them and to make patterns other than those imposed by modern (or even ancient) county boundaries. At £150, the *Castellarium* is too costly to treat in this way. Even at this price, however, no library with any pretensions to serving those concerned with castles should be without it.

Feeding on the past

Elizabeth Archibald

KEVIN L. MORRIS
The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature
259pp. Croom Helm. £18.95.
0709935110

Chesterton wrote of nineteenth-century medievalism: "Seldom has one whole period like the present fed so regularly and persistently on one whole period of the past." Romantic and Victorian literature offers voluminous testimony to this medieval influence, but the title of Kevin Morris's book is misleading: *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* would have been more accurate. His specific subject is "religious medievalism", which he defines as "that aspect of literary medievalism which refers especially to the medieval Church in a religious or quasi-religious manner". The questions which he addresses include the seriousness and significance of post-Enlightenment medievalism; the relationship between aesthetic culture and aesthetic religion; and the connection between religious medievalism, the Catholic revival, and the Romantic movement.

Dr. Morris describes religious medievalism as a cuckoo's egg in the nest of Romanticism; he argues that it is a radical form of Romanticism, or "Romanticism dissatisfied with itself". He discusses the development of medievalism and anti-medievalism, and devotes a whole chapter to the dozen of nineteenth-century medievalists, Kenelm Digby, and to the Young Englanders who were inspired by his writings. "Nothing but monastic institutions will Christianize Manchester", wrote Lord Henry Manners, a founder member of the group; but Disraeli, one of its leaders, did not promise in his political career the ideals which he preached in his novels. Macaulay thought Digby blinded to the present and the future by his obsession with the past. Many shared Lord Acton's view that the medieval Church could provide a valuable stimulus for social reforms, but not a precise model.

Straying somewhat from his literary theme, Morris includes a chapter on medievalism in ecclesiastical architecture, and another on Ruskin and medieval art. Here the difficulty of distinguishing between aesthetic and religious responses is particularly clear. According to Wapole, "Gothic churches infuse superstition—Cretan admiration." The conversion of the Tractarian Isaac Williams, reputedly after a visit to Canterbury Cathedral, was not necessarily a victory for Catholic theology. On the other hand, Ruskin admitted and rejoiced medieval art even in his most anti-Catholic phase.

Chesterton's dictum that "Catholicism is not medievalism" stands at the head of the chapter on Catholics and Anglo-Catholics, but Morris never really confronts the issues which it raises.

nor does he discuss the relationship of religious medievalism to the medieval Church behind the image. He comments in passing that the Romantic and Victorian medievalists preferred the medieval Church to the early Church (not a very clear distinction) because of its "romantically exotic colour", but never enlarges on this important theme. It is disappointing too not to be told more about the medieval sources used by the proponents of religious medievalism. In the first chapter there is a terse reference to important developments in historicism and historiography during the eighteenth century, but the only medieval authors mentioned are St Francis of Assisi, Dante, Chaucer and St Thomas Aquinas.

As Morris several times admits, medieval beliefs and practices were interpreted with considerable idiosyncrasy by the various writers whom he discusses. The great variety of response leaves the reader uncertain about the meaning, and indeed the value, of the rather cumbersome term "religious medievalism". Morris concludes that it was a seriously Catholic phenomenon, not just antiquarian or aesthetic. But he insists on "the ambiguity, duality, equivocality and confusion inhering in virtually every manifestation of religious medievalism". He attributes this confusion to various causes, including "periods of transition" and "the traversing of the shadowy borderland between culture and religion". He himself certainly traverses this borderland, and it is not easy to determine the focus of his book. The issue of Romanticism is largely abandoned after the opening chapters. There are frequent references to literature, but few texts are discussed in any depth, and in the final chapters art becomes the centre of attention. In the introduction Morris declares that the socio-political aspect of medievalism studied by Alice Chandler in *A Dream of Order* (1971) is not his theme: yet as he makes very clear, socio-political ideals were a fundamental part of the attraction of religious medievalism for Digby and the Young Englanders, and for many others, especially non-Catholics such as Cobden.

Much interesting information is offered in this study, but it is hard to digest; in the effort to treat many aspects of medievalism, Morris does not do justice to any of them, and he lacks the light touch of a Mark Grouard. Numerous fragmentary quotations are packed into every paragraph, many from secondary sources which could have been relegated to the notes. His publishers have done him a disservice by photo-reproducing his typescript, and by careless proof-reading. It is not clear at what market the book is aimed; surely readers who can disentangle Chaucerian and Ultraromanticisms do not need to be told that "ed." stands for "edited by edition", and "pub." for "published". Nevertheless Dr. Morris has drawn attention to an important and interesting area of Romantic and Victorian medievalism. The image of the medieval Church in this period deserves further investigation.

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149 141 142 143

recognition" memory has a strictly limited capacity for high-quality memory, but when it is overloaded, the effect is not to create a simple overflow, in which no new information can be input. Rather, the input of too much information leads to the partial degradation of information previously stored; the superimposition of the excess information smudges or obscures the information already in memory.

(2) No central control, but rather a partially anarchic system of rather competitive elements. See, eg, Feldman and Ballard's discussion of "winner take all" or WTA networks. (Many of these ideas can be seen to be new versions of much older ideas in AI - eg, Selfridge's PANDEMONIUM, and of course "perceptions".)

(3) No complex message-passing between modules or subsystems. That is, for instance, no discursive messages "about the outside world". The fundamental premise of connectionism, according to Feldman and Ballard, "is that individual neurons do not transmit large amounts of symbolic information. Instead they

compute by being appropriately connected to large numbers of similar units."

(4) A reliance on statistical properties of ensembles to achieve effects.

(5) The relatively mindless and inefficient making and unmaking of many partial pathways of solutions, until the system settles down after a while not on the (predesignated or pre-designatable) "right" solution, but only with whatever "solution" or "solutions" "feel right" to the system. This combines the idea of simulated annealing (or a close kin of it) with the idea that, in nature, not all "problems" have "solutions" and there is a difference between a process stopping and its being turned off.

The models being explored are still computational but the level at which the modelling is computational is much closer to neuroscience than to psychology. What is computed is not (for instance) an implication of some proposition about Chicago, or a formal description of a grammatical transformation, but (for instance) the new value of some threshold-

like parameter of some element which all by itself has no univocal external-world semantic role. At such a low level of description, the semantics of the symbolic medium of computation refer only (at most) to events, processes, states, "addresses" within the brain - within the computational system itself. In short, on this view the only formal, computational "language of thought" is rather like a machine language for a computer, and you can't say "it's raining in Chicago" in machine language; all you can express are imperatives about what to do to what contents of what address and the like.

How, then, do we ever get anything happening in such a system that is properly about Chicago? On these views there must indeed be higher levels of description at which we can attribute external-semantic properties to brain thingumabobs (this brain thingumabob refers to Chicago, and that one refers to MIT), but at such a level the interactions and relationships between elements will not be computational, but - and here we lapse back into metaphor and handwaving - statistical, emergent, holistic. Thus in this vision of things the low, computational level is importantly unlike a machine language, in that there is no supposition of a direct translation or implementation relation between the high-level phenomena which do have an external-world semantics and the low-level phenomena, which do not. If there were, then the usual methodological precept of computer science would be in order: ignore the hardware since the idiosyncrasies of its particular style of implementation add nothing to the phenomenon, provided the phenomenon is rigorously described at the higher level.

My favourite metaphor for this proposal is meteorology. Think of meteorology and its relation to physics. Clouds go scudding by, rain falls, snowflakes pile up in drifts, rainbows emerge; this is the language of folk meteorology. Modern-day folk meteorologists - that is, all of us - know perfectly well that somehow or other all those individual clouds and rainbows and snowflakes and gusts of wind are just the emergent saliences (salience relative to our perceptual apparatus) of vast distributions of physical energy, water droplets and the like.

There is a gap between folk meteorology and physics, but not a very large and mysterious one. Moving back and forth between the two domains takes us on familiar paths. It is important to note that the meteorologist's instruments are barometers and hygrometers and thermometers, not cloudmeters, rainbommeters and snowflakemeters. The regularities of which the science of meteorology is composed concern pressure, temperature and relative humidity, not the folk-meteorological categories.

There is not, today, any field of computational cloudology. Is this because meteorology is in its infancy, or is such an imagined science as out of place as astrology? Note that there are patterns, regularities, large-scale effects and, in particular, reactive effects between items in folk-meteorological categories and other things. For instance, many plants and animals are designed to discriminate folk meteorological categories, for one purpose or another. But we can grant all this without having to suppose that there is a formal system governing those patterns and regularities, or the reactions to them. Similarly - and this is the moral of the meteorological metaphor - it does not follow from the fact that the folk-psychological level of explanation is the "right" level for many purposes that there must be a computational theory at or near that level. The alternative to High Church Computationalism is that it is the clouds and rainbows in the brain that have intentionality - that refer to Chicago, and grandmother - but that the rigorous computational theory that must account for the passage and transformation of these clouds and rainbows will be at a lower level, where the only semantics is internal - and somewhat strained as semantics (in the same way the "semantics" of machine languages is a far cry from the semantics of natural languages).

But how are we to move beyond the metaphor and develop these new low-level hunches into explicit theory at the "higher", or more "general", cognitive level? The bits of theory that are becoming explicit in the New

Connectionist movement are relatively close to the "hardware" level of description, and the cognitive work they can do so far is often characterized as either relatively peripheral or relatively subordinate. For instance pattern-recognition appears (to many theorists) to be a relatively early or peripheral component in perception, and memory appears (to many theorists) to be a rather subordinate ("merely clerical" one might say) component in the higher intellectual processes of planning or problem-solving. To the ideologues of the West, however, these appearances have misled. All thinking, no matter how intellectual or central or (even) rule-governed, will turn out to make essential use of fundamentally perceptual operations such as versatile pattern-recognition; it is no accident that we often say "I see" when we come to understand. And, according to the Western view, the apportionment of responsibility and power between memory and intelligent processing will be unlike the underlying (and ineluctably influential) division of labour in von Neumann machines, in which the memory is inert, cold storage, and all the action happens in the central processing unit; a proper memory will do a great deal of the intelligent work itself.

So far as I know, no one has yet come up with a way of sorting out these competing hunches in a medium of expression that is uniform, clear and widely understood (even if not formal). What we need is a level of description that is to these bits of theory roughly as software talk is to hardware talk in conventional computer science. That is, it should abstract from as many low-level processing details as possible while remaining in the spirit of the new architectures.

Prospects for the development of this level of description are bright, but aside from a few landmark successes, such as David Marr's *Vision* (1982), the effort in this area is still so inchoate that any attempt at summary description would be misleadingly concrete.

This article is excerpted from a paper presented at the Sloan Foundation Conference on the philosophical foundations of cognitive science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May 17-20, 1984. The complete text will appear in M. Brand and R. Harth (eds): *Problems in the Representation of Knowledge and Belief*, University of Arizona Press.

1. See, eg, "The Significance of Significance: The Case of Cognitive Psychology", in Solove Mitchell and Michael Rosen, (eds): *The Need for Interpretation*, 1983, pp. 141-69.
2. Stephen Stich: *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science*, 1983; Robert Cummins: *The Nature of Psychological Explanation*, 1983; John Haugeland: "The Nature and Plausibility of Cognitivism", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1978, and *Mind Design*, 1981; Margaret Boden: "What is Computational Psychology?" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1984.
3. See, eg, "Beyond Belief" in Andrew Woodfield (Editor): *Thought and Object*, 1982; "Styles of Mental Representation", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1983.
4. "Physical Symbol Systems", in *Cognitive Science*, 1980, 4.
5. See, eg, *Rules and Representations*, 1980.
6. See, eg, his articles in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1978, 1980.
7. Hofstadter has suggested that Zadeh's fuzzy set theory is actually better seen as an attempt, entirely within the Eastern Orthodox, to achieve *West Coast ends with East Pole means*. I am inclined to agree; this is one of the fine points of interpretation in need of further work.
8. In "Artificial Intelligence: Subcognition as Computation" in Machup and Mansfield (eds): *Study of Information: Interdisciplinary Meetings*, 1983, pp. 263-85. Hofstadter calls High Church Computationalism the Boolean Dream.
9. See, eg, Feldman and Ballard: "Connectionist Models and Their Properties", in *Cognitive Science*, 1982.
10. See, eg, D. Hillis: "The Connected Machine" (Computer Architecture for the New Wave), AI Memo 646, MIT, September 1981; Scott E. Fahlman, Geoffrey Hinton and Terrence J. Sejnowski: "Massively Parallel Architectures for AI: NETL, Thistle and Boltzmann Machines", in *Proc AAAI*, Washington, DC, 1983.
11. Douglas Hofstadter: "The Architecture of Jumbo", in *Proceedings of the Second International Machine Learning Workshop*, University of Illinois, 1983.
12. See S. Kirkpatrick, C.D. Gelati, and M.P. Vecchi: "Optimization by Simulated Annealing", *Science*, May 13, 1983; and Paul Smolensky: "Information Theory, A Mathematical Framework for Memory", *Artificial Intelligence*, in *Proc AAAI*, August 1983; Washington DC.

The asphalt jungle

Angela Carter

ANNE CAMPBELL
The Girls in the Gang: A report from New York City
277pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £14.95.
0631 13374 7

The lives of the three women members of New York street gangs, the subject of Anne Campbell's piece of investigative sociology, are curiously anachronistic, as though there were a time warp in New York City and a sizeable segment of its population were living, not in Reaganite affluence, but the terrible, brief lives of the poor of medieval Paris or Victorian London. Sun-Africa, one of the women whose lives Ms Campbell has partially shared and whose tape-recorded voices she transcribes for us, seems, says Campbell, to "perceive life as a kind of jungle in which another gang, the police or a bullet are all likely to stop her in her path". This is Hobbesian talk, but Sun-Africa's perception appears to tally quite well with the recorded facts.

This is a book about one aspect of the schizophrenic geography of the United States, in which the First World co-exists cheek by jowl with the Third and the inhabitants of both worlds watch the same soap operas on television. The girls in the gangs, or, rather, the female auxiliaries of the boys' gangs - named with such baroque invention, the Dragon

All-rounders

Jonathan Burnham

LIZA CRIFIELD DALBY
Gelsa
347pp. University of California Press. £19.95.
052004742 7

This investigation into the world of the gelsa is a curious amalgam of personal memoir and ethnography. Liza Crifield Dalby observed the *miyu shobai*, Japan's demi-monde of performers and courtesans, from the inside: she was adopted by a Kyoto gelsa-house, became a gelsa known as Ichigiku and seems to have been a great success. The gelsa world is a society within a society, and as such might be viewed - Dalby doesn't emphasize this - as microcosmic, with its hierarchic structure, and its stress on a disciplined training, on an immaculate exterior and on the necessary gap between outward expression and genuine feeling, the *honne* / *tatemae* division which the Japanese take so much for granted. On the other hand it is unique: an all-female society in which the members address each other as "sister" and their leader as "mother", and a way of life which leads anarchically away from the institutions of marriage and family.

Dalby devotes a brief section of *Gelsa* to history, charting the profession's fluctuations in popularity, and correctly underlines the gelsa's progress from arbiter of fashion in the Edo period to curator of tradition in the present day. The hazy line between the gelsa's duties as performing artist and as upper-crust prostitute remains indistinct, although Dalby is at pains to establish the gelsa as principally an entertainer, proficient in at least one of the classical arts. The recherché nature of the profession has turned the gelsa into a modern form of minstrel, the obligatory status symbol to flourish at the company banquet. Girls who choose this profession tend to be, as Dalby points out, of an aggressively modern cast; and those older Japanese who like to revere the gelsa as the representative of a dying cultural tradition would be horrified if their daughter decided to become one.

The organization of Dalby's study is somewhat hectic, skipping between ethnography and reminiscence, and there are odd gaps: little mention of the literary tradition that helped to foster the image of the gelsa, and no exploration of the aesthetic implications of the particular mode of heightened artificiality which the gelsa presents. *Gelsa* is unlikely to be the conclusive study of the subject, but it remains an entertaining, first-hand account of a year as a gelsa, and its tone, although awkward at times, is refreshingly straightforward and earthy, in true gelsa style.

Debs, the Turban Queens, the Emperor Ladies - all adore soap opera. The soaps take place in surroundings of extraordinary luxury: the Sandman Ladies, the Elegant Queens, the Devil's Rebels (Ladies), live in roach-ridden apartments on burned-out blocks. But the soaps are saying, seal the rich have problems, too. Problems can't be solved by money. It is not the life style but the melodramatics of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* and *All My Children* with which Campbell's informants identify, for their own lives are conducted with similar passions more like those of grand opera than of soap opera. Passion is free and the girls are poor: criminality in these boroughs does not procure rich dividends. The steadiest source of income remains the welfare cheque - the price, as Gore Vidal once said, that the United States pays for keeping ethnic minorities out of the mainstream of economic life. Of Campbell's three women, two are Puerto Rican and one is Black but not Black American - Sun-Africa's family are emigrants from Panama.

Gangs have been a feature of New York life since the earliest days of the city; the territorial groupings, the sense of family ties imparted by gang membership, all these created, and still create, a sense of community in the featureless space of the new city, the new and unknown society. Gangs seem to be growing more and more psychologically important as most of New York that is not Manhattan grows daily to look more and more like the suburbs of Hell.

Violent death is the constant companion of Sun-Africa, Weeza and Connie. Sun-Africa has suffered the deaths of not one but two lovers (both shot while committing burglaries). Weeza loses her common-law husband, probably killed by a rival gang, during the course of Campbell's field work. Connie is forced to move house because of death threats to her family. They all fight in gang wars; sometimes beg and steal; discipline errant girls; give succour and advice, but the Women's Movement has had no appreciable effect on their contingent status. They join the gangs for love of a man, or because their brothers are members, or for fun, or for all three. The girl "dressed outlaw", with the flick-knife at her belt, is a mother and a lover, first and foremost. The gangs present no radical alternative life style for women. Nor for men.

"The gang is not a counter-culture but a microcosm of American society", concludes

Campbell. She quotes Bob Dylan, ironically: "To live outside the law you must be honest", and the gangs readily subscribe to the myth of the romantic outlaw, but they are hypocrites. For all those whom Campbell talks to, crime is something other people do; when we do it, we have no other choice and are absolved of responsibility. The gangs like to think of themselves as vigilantes, keeping their neighbourhoods safe; in fact, they commit most of their depredations right there on the block. The characteristic crimes of the alarmingly named Sex Boys and Girls (of which Weeza is a member) are to rob Saturday-night drunks and hit old ladies on the head before snatching their handbags. The Sandman, into which Connie has married, confine themselves to dealing in dope, which, in the circumstances, is behaving like boy scouts.

The Five Per Cent Nation, though, is something else, even if the New York Police Department define it as a gang. Five Per Centers are the enlightened ones, "the Muslims and the Muslims' sons". Sun-Africa, who took that name when she joined them, is a refugee both from the lower middle class and also from a promising career as a juvenile delinquent. Before she became Sun-Africa, she distinguished herself in an autonomous, exclusively female gang. Style and shop-lifting were their thing and they were known as the Puma Crew, after the brand of sneakers they liked to wear. Subsequently Sun-Africa donned the long robe of an "earth", as the men, or "gods", of the Five Per Cent Nation call their women, and now lives in a kind of harem - the "gods" are polygamous, as befits good Muslims. Her family wanted her to go to college and they are startled and upset by her present way of life. But it is almost as if Sun-Africa, terrified by her experience of the freedom of the criminal, deliberately sought out for herself a life bound by the most stringent limitations.

Although the Five Per Cent Nation is notorious for the murders and robberies connected with it, and has recruited existing gangs into it, it has, unlike the Angels of the Night and the Shadows of Death, an ideology that makes sense of its members' experience. When Sun-Africa says that if it were not for the Nation she would probably be dead, it is impossible not to believe her. In an anomic world, any value system may seem better than none. Sun-Africa is sixteen.

Score-bored

Michael Tanner

PICKLES
Queens
289pp. Quartet. £8.95.
0 7043 2439 3

The title of this fascinating and often brilliant book is a bit misleading. It is about male metropolitan homosexuals, especially those who cruise compulsively and go to Heaven, whereas "queen" is normally applied to middle-aged camp gays, or certain stereotypes, such as opera queens, size queens, and drag queens. All these naturally make their appearance in Pickles's authoritative work, but to call a rent-boy a queen is stretching it. It's not surprising, though, that as a title the word proved irresistible.

The book begins with thumbnail sketches of twelve kinds of queen; far from exhaustive, but unfailingly accurate. Thus the Straight Queen: "Although he sleeps with his wife and loves his children, he is tormented by the memory of a wicked fling in Cambridge with a lay-clerk . . . He likes Waugh and High Church paraphernalia, especially the vestments. The Passion interests him most, and purple is his favourite colour . . . Shabbier queens like film-stars, but this chap's pin-up is the Virgin Mary." The tone of the book is itself clearly queeny. In some ways it is reminiscent of early Angus Wilson, with its combination of sharp-eyed comedy and Port Royal-like moralism. Pickles evidently disapproves strongly of almost everyone he writes about, and the portrayal of the lives of his queens, once they get moving in a series of playlets, is profoundly depressing. The obsessional interest in "scoring", which goes with a lack of interest in any of the qualities of whom one scores with, apart from the physical (and a highly selective interest even in those); the incessant putting-down of other queens, with no hint of camaraderie in the front line; the tendency to feminize many aspects of a social group for whom women essentially don't exist, which involves giving one's fellow queens down-market women's names; the lunatic interest in *exactly* how one looks, especially how old - all this contributes to a nightmare, and one which recurs in most queens' lives every twenty-four hours.

Occasionally Pickles seems to be too familiar with a world which once intrigued him, so that its ruthless elimination of almost everything that makes people interesting has come merely to disgust him. As in Martin Amis's *Money*, which paints a similarly bleak picture of a contemporary lifestyle (the vile word is for once the *mot juste*), it is only by dint of skillfully, if not wholly plausibly, diversifying the dialect of this tribe that Pickles is able to sustain interest in them.

His book has also a slender but encouraging narrative thread: Ben's diary. Ben is of the queens' world, arty and unemployed, but with aspirations to a longer-lasting and deeper relationship than it is likely to provide, and he is fortunate enough to find one. What is more, the course of the relationship is so deftly sketched that it becomes a moving counterpoint to the strident main theme of the book, and in the end reaches a tenuous but triumphant climax, so that the "Bliss" which is the final word of *Queens* actually designates Ben's state of mind plausibly, as well as being a tired camp exclamation, and a self-conscious Joycean echo. It is preceded by a row on Hungerford Bridge which captures perfectly the idiotic way in which people move to an understanding of one another. And it is contrasted with two really ancient queens (Pickles's characters are as addicted to "reality" as everyone who wants to keep reality at a distance is nowadays) lamenting the state of frivolous misery in which nearly all the characters we have encountered going through their ritual paces spend their lives.

Both the blurb and the prefatory note imply that queens add to the colour and glamour of the contemporary scene, but I don't think Pickles believes that; certainly he gives no evidence of its being true. But the gusto of his diatribe, while not exhilarating, compels attention to this particular hedonists' hell, and makes the book one of the liveliest pieces of contemporary fictional sociology I have come across.

The very model of the modern

Adam Hodgkin

J. DAVID BOLTER
Turing's Man: Western culture in the computer age
264pp. Duckworth. £12.95.
07156 19179

J. David Bolter is a professor of Classics in North Carolina who has also been a visiting fellow in Computer Science at Yale University. These appointments hint at an unusual combination of expertise which excellently qualifies him to write a book on the cultural significance of computers. *Turing's Man* is persistently interesting, not least because Professor Bolter is always willing to risk a bold line of speculation, and uses his examples from ancient cultures to telling effect. His broad interests are well illustrated by a bibliography in which Kirk and Raven's *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, naturally and unpretentiously rubs shoulders with a lecture on finiteness by Donald Knuth and Tracy Kidder's documentary journalism about the computer industry.

Bolter's central thesis is that the computer is a defining technology for our age, as the technology of the clock was for the seventeenth century and the craft technologies of the potter and weaver were for the ancient world. By this means he succeeds in placing the revolutionary effects and deep potential of computers and computational methods in a broad historical context and a humanist perspective. He is a long way from the old view of computers as mere calculating devices or "number-crunchers": in his chapters on language, memory, and creativity he stresses that computers are machines for processing symbols - for processing all kinds of information - not solely or even primarily machines for processing numbers. Interests of these kinds in the linguistic and the synthetic rather than the numerical and the analytic are not surprising in a professor of Classics, but they are still quite unusual among authors of books proclaiming the power and promise of the computer age.

Bolter explains the basic workings of the modern computer, both the software and the hardware. Perhaps he could have given less space to these matters, since there are many other books which perform this introductory function well. The originality of *Turing's Man* lies in the attempt to assess the cultural significance of the computer. But this is not the kind of computer book which dazzles the reader with glibly, parallel processing, and sketches of electronic superabundance and omniscience. Bolter may have been bitten by the computer bug, but he balances the marvels of computer technology with some healthily downbeat scepticism. In his chapter on "Time and Progress in the Computer Age" he reproduces an instructive passage from Tracy Kidder's *Soul of a New Machine*. Kidder is reporting a design engineer on "time":

I feel very comfortable talking in nanoseconds. I sit

at one of these analyzers and nanoseconds are wide. I mean you can see them go by. "Jesus," I say, "that signal takes twelve nanoseconds to get from there to there." Those are real big things to me when I'm building a computer. Yet when I think about it, how much longer it takes to snap your fingers, I've lost track of what a nanosecond really means.

To this Bolter drily appends the comment: "If it takes, by the way, half a second to snap one's fingers, that is five hundred million nanoseconds." Later in the same chapter we find a reminder that this possibility of a mystical appreciation of the fine-grainedness of time, at the machine level, needs to be set against the failure of computer time to obey even the laws of arithmetic at the human level: programming tasks are commonly measured in man-months, but a task that can be accomplished by three men in ten months probably cannot be accomplished by ten men in three months.

The chapter on time is one of the best, but Bolter does not present a convincing case for his assertion that the experience of programming will encourage a return to the ancient view of cyclical cultural rise and decline. I suspect that the computer age encourages a rather different model of progress - one of steady and accelerating improvement, creating a climate of permanent obsolescence, punctuated by occasional and episodic "crashes".

What then are we to make of the central thesis of the book, that the computer is a *defining* technology for our age? There is one difficulty with the concept of a defining technology which Bolter squarely faces - it is not the same thing as a very important technology. Agricultural, educational, and medical revolutions have not led philosophers and poets to liken the universe or the psyche to a plough-share, a printing-press, or a public drain. Is this just because the loom, the clock, and the computer have more glamour? Bolter suggests an answer along these lines. Some technologies have appealed to the mind of an age as having some special power to illustrate and redefine our relationship to nature. But it is not clear that an answer of this sort leaves the concept of a defining technology with much explanatory power. As Bolter admits, any technology may fulfil the function of a defining technology to some extent; several such technologies may be knocking around at any particular time and our commitment to one of them over another may be a matter of fashion rather than reason.

These thoughts suggest a certain parallel with T.S. Kuhn's concept of the "paradigm" and the "paradigm shift" in the history of science. It has been difficult to pin down Kuhn's concept in a tidy fashion, but it does usefully concentrate our attention on features which simplify explanatory concepts: overlook. We may not like the thought that we are becoming Turing's men, and object violently to the humanoid assemblage of computer parts on the jacket of this book. But we do need to consider and take the measure of those modes of reason which may become dominant simply because they are susceptible to and determinable by the technology of our age.

Sparingly populated

Simon Rae

WILLIAM LOGAN
Difficulty
 64pp. Edinburgh: Salamander Press. £3.95.
 0907540430

ANDREW HARVEY
No Diamonds, No Hat, No Honey
 72pp. Cape. £4.
 0 224 02968 1

PAUL HYLAND
The Stubbhorn Forest
 95pp. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe. £3.95.
 090642759 2

William Logan's poetry is cerebral, abstract and elusive. Its tone is fastidious, at times clinical, and its prevailing mood is sombre. The first poem in *Difficulty*, "Clare and Silence", is loosely structured on the well-known "Journey out of Essex", and uses Clare as a foil for ideas on the constrictions inherent in language and the possibility of an escape

where the language no longer
 incinerates him in paper, where words
 are only the wood, the church bell
 timing across cut fields

which seems to hint at some epiphany in which silence – wordlessness – becomes the truest articulation of experience. The fact that Clare was too exhausted to have had much time for such visionary leaps beyond language on his dreadful journey is neither here nor there, though Logan's final "Clare, your madness / confirms the losses that never were", while pointing up whole areas of misery deriving from Clare's delusions, does challenge the response that most of his losses – the loss of the Helpston environment through enclosure, the loss of his publisher and his public, etc – were real enough. Like Auden's "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry", it is a rhetorical flourish that tells about half the truth.

Landscape features importantly in Logan's poetry, though without Clare's particularity and obsessive sense of place. Logan, an American, falls into what might be called the *National Geographic* tradition – boundlessly wide-ranging, rootless, detached: "Heaving up the slow encumbering shore, / Atlantic waterspouts retain a light / beneath the skin. / Volcanoes impose their immediate weather" ("Crows and DNA"). There is obviously some affinity with Elizabeth Bishop in this aspect of his work, and other poems point to her influence – "Cartography", "From a Far Cry, a Return to the City", echoing Bishop's "From the Country to the City", and "Florida", subtitled "a postcard", possibly in deference to the poem on the same subject in *North & South*. "News of the Moon" actually opens with the same image – desk-lamp as moon – as Bishop's "12 o'clock News".

But this should not be overstressed. Logan has not based either the sound or the shape of his poetry on Bishop's. He lacks – or hasn't been tempted to cultivate – what David Kalstone called Bishop's "relentless unflagging specificity"; nor is there any hint of that engaging, quirky and confiding speaking voice that makes Bishop so distinctive. Logan in fact has developed a rather chilling and impersonal poetry with scant tolerance for the human. In comparison with his first book, *Sad-faced Men* (1982), *Difficulty* is sparsely populated. People tend to make fleeting appearances before giving way to the inanimate again; psychological, even physical, states are seen in terms of the natural world: "Your sickness exchanges / the sky for a rotting onion, / shedding rings upon the bruised air / until a last scorched light steadies / the horizon and stars burn in". In "Jealousy", "A silent caller knows the number of our telephone, / and I invent for you a book of lovers, / each with his appointment and balking speech", but at the end of the poem "the hole in the heart is represented by 'the hole in the shattered window / an emptiness the shape of Australia". The title poem itself, a lengthy and complex "evocation of a painful love affair", as the book cover puts it, represents Logan at his most ambitious, but also at his most obscure and mannered: "How take a riot from the radical of passion? / These houseplant days, a simple graft will fail / the mandate of its kind." After that (it is as much a relief as a surprise to come upon "The Shootist", a Wil-

liam Plomerish ballad about a hit-man, which captures well the meanness, menace and megalomania of the hired killer, the little man who wants to be Mr Big: "there won't be weather tomorrow / unless I want there to be. / There won't be any satellites / or any sea." William Logan is an assured talent, and *Difficulty*, if impersonal, marks a greater intellectual concentration and a linguistic advance on *Sad-faced Men*.

In his luminously evocative *A Journey in Ladakh* (1983), at once a travel book and a chapter of spiritual autobiography, Andrew Harvey records at one point his Rimpoche's warning against the "vanity and posturing of the Ego that loves its suffering, and clings to its despair and depressions and fears". The effects of his pilgrimage are everywhere apparent in *No Diamonds, No Hat, No Honey*, but the book is far from a solemn recapitulation of Buddhist teaching. Nor is its argument conducted in purely Eastern terms. As befits a believer in the ultimate cross-fertilization of East and West, Harvey has clothed his essentially Buddhist message in Western raiment, pillaging the Western tradition from Nebuchadnezzar to Nietzsche, from the Sphinx to Scott of the Antarctic.

Thirty-nine poems, the majority without titles, form a dramatic sequence in which Fernando and Lydia, dipping constantly into the dressing-up box of history, spar continuously and one-sidedly. Fernando is both poet and spiritual seeker. Lydia his mordant muse and live-in Fury. The blurb indicates that she is "connected to Prajna (wisdom) – the power of cutting, savaging, clarifying, indispensable to Enlightenment". It is apparent from the word go that she is going to be kept busy. Poem I begins with a false start: "Bitter as the winter traditionally is, and bitter / As the first scent of magnolias is to those / In love but not loved . . .". Lydia isn't having any of it: "You must dissolve that music", she said. . . . There must be no magnolias. / No syntax opening like a rose . . .". Poem XXI, "Lament", opens with Fernando in a gently lachrymose mood: "By the waters of Babylon I sat down and . . .". "Shat," said Lydia loudly.

"Lydia, really! You are not usually . . .". "You shat and that was that."

"I wept," I said, starting to . . .". "You know I did."

But Lydia is locked like a heat-seeking missile on to the whole programme of self-regarding suffering. "Why didn't you just leave Babylon?" she asks, "Just get on a bus and leave?"

"You wept, you watched yourself weeping, in the still, glittering water . . .".

That kept you captive.
 The old story! You stored your tears like pearls.
 Such pearls! To cast before – such swine! – in chains
 Of Tragic, tortured song."

At times Fernando may seem too easy a target. An opening line like "It's such a relief not to be proud any more" (XXVII) is so obviously a prelude to the proverbial fall, but Lydia manoeuvres Fernando into a display of intellectual pride with delightful ingenuity. Although we see Fernando succumbing every time, the sequence is saved from repetitiveness by the variety of personae and situations Fernando and Lydia adopt; and by the verse's lightness and sureness of touch.

Paul Hyland's *The Stubbhorn Forest* is rooted in the English tradition, going back to the Anglo-Saxon. It is a poetry that celebrates and holds dear the English countryside – like Clare's, whose "mouldwarps" are perhaps recalled on reading "Minding Things", in which the poet walks with a countryman and notes evidence of "mole's moose tapped out in darkness". Clare, though, was his own countryman. The point in "Minding Things" is that Hyland, however faring about the countryside he may be, is not. The poem contrasts absolute inwardness with a known terrain with the self-confessed outsider's straining to feel and see and grasp: "You mind each flare, and tie in your field-nerve, as a blind man? reads his own body-scape, I stare and stare." Similarly in Hyland's poems of place – that place being for the most part the Isle of Purbeck, about which he wrote *The Ingrained Island* (1978) – there is a detached overview, supported by much well-researched knowledge, that contrasts with the embedded viewpoint of the true local.

Inmates of the household

Bernard O'Donoghue

PETER FORBES
Abolishing the Dark
 59pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £4.50.

JOHN MOLE
In and Out of the Apple
 60pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.

PATRICK HARE
Aeroplanes in Childhood
 53pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £4.50.

Recent poetry has seen a never-ending production line of family poems; Peter Forbes brings a cheering breath of fresh air into this domestic milieu, restoring to poetry a measure of positivist objectivity. Forbes, who did a Chemistry degree, sets out his purpose in the book's epigraph, taken from the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

If the time should over come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.

The poem "Naming and Knowing" here best expresses the attempt to reconcile the "incurably plural" nature of the world with the scientific instinct towards "a deeper knowledge of less and less": Liam Hudson's convergent and divergent imaginations. A good example of the process in action is "Magnesium" from "The Elements in their Humours":

The ribbon flares like a hot silver flower.
 A white hole punched in the core of space;
 Actinic rays give a flash-bulb glare,
 Leaving pale white fumes and your burned-out stare.

"Actinic" (referring to sunshine's property of causing chemical change, as in photography) has great metaphorical resonance, but Forbes typically does not labour it. All the poems in the book's third section (called, from a line in the last poem, "Butterfly, shuttlecock, pulley and string") use scientific knowledge like this. It is a two-way process: science is a source of metaphor, serving literature, but it is often suggested that science itself is inert until it is humanized. "In Corpore Sano" describes morning exercises which make the body a well-tuned engine; but what is to be effected with it? "Surely there are tasks, employment for these fingers? / I draw up my knees and sit and stare."

This is not Forbes's only mood or technique. The two earlier sections contain highly evocative personal poems, of which the best, "Poem for Ian", describes with entirely unsentimental sensitivity a hole-in-the-heart operation performed on his baby son. This book has a remarkably wide range. It is not without imperfections: sometimes the metres seem too insistent in their regularity and turn into a kind of doggerel; and Forbes is too fond of poetic formality: for example "Experiments with an Air-pump" seems to me an excellent subject, treated as ever with restrained amusement, that is rather spoilt by being cast as a

half-sestina. But Forbes's is an exciting and entertaining first volume, and the novelty of its sensibility carries the promise of a noble poet.

In and Out of the Apple displays John Mole's familiar formal accomplishment and contains some fine poems, but it lacks (as his previous volumes tended to) coherence of purpose. The shorter second section, "Penny Toys", has no pretensions to offering anything more than jingles (indeed the lack of pretension in Mole, while it is extremely likeable, is also rather disabling). The first section has thirty short poems under the unpromisingly modest epigraph from Conrad: "These, too, are things human, already distant in their appeal." The childhood poems which this introduces are often evocative, and one of them, "The Birthday", is outstanding of its kind. The child on his fifth birthday has unwittingly said something that wounds his parents and sits miserably in his pedal-car, having learnt

that truth –
 Casting its shadow, neither cruel nor kind –
 Encroaches on his parents like a blind
 Pullled slowly upwards to obscure them both.

But this major success (anthologists please note) only comes when Mole momentarily overcomes his self-consciousness and embarrassment. Anxiety to avoid portentousness or pomposity causes his bare, parodic expression often to descend to the flip. There is a casual echo of "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow", as well as "never, never, never, never" and a light-hearted look at Hamlet and the grave-diggers: too much passing Shakespeare for one short volume. This fragmentary allusiveness is presented sometimes as a statement of the difficulty of expression (in "Listening" and "Nobody's Last Words"), but it is precisely because Mole gives the impression of being fundamentally serious – admirably so – that its playfulness doesn't suit him. A good programme for Mole's next volume might be to abandon his traditional diversions into jazz and children's poetry, and to sustain the seriousness represented by the sparsely staccato "The President's Fountain" and the haunting "The Birthday".

Patrick Hare takes paintings as the stimuli for a number of his best poems, those grouped at the end of *Aeroplanes in Childhood*. The subject of most of the book is memories of family and childhood, and this overworked theme is not often treated here with enough force or originality. The poems are best when they move beyond personal memory to a longer historical memory, when they almost unvaryingly (and fruitfully) collaborate with painterly attentiveness, as in "The soldiers' defaced surprise" in the wall-paintings of the impressive "Domesday". The most interesting angle of approach to the personal past here is the way the process of reaching it is shown to be painful, in violent imagery, involving blood in a number of poems. And the scrupulous painter's eye confers on the writing its clarity and freedom from over-elaboration (which sometimes descends to flatness, as in "A Book").

The Mountain Hare

A white mountain hare
 sits quietly on a stool
 and watches the curatorial evening
 fall through a bottle of wine.

Stuffed in 1926, you know,
 it has nothing left to fear,
 has nothing to do but embody the silence
 and share the light from the river with the walls.

It tends to be like that in this Museum,
 and since such events are hardly other than real
 the hare has decreed that henceforth they'll be known,
 for simplicity, as December Afternoon.

Everything here, says the mountain hare,
 resolves itself into aspects of collection:
 while careless tides ascend the nearby staithe
 some sky drops in, to take a look at our bones.

PETER DIDSBURY

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The intelligence game

T. J. Binyon

LEN DEIGHTON
Mexico Set
 31pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
 0011506100

Mexico Set is the second volume of a projected trilogy; at the end of the first, *Berlin Game*, published last year, the hero Bernard Samson discovers that his wife Fiona is his Delilah: while working with him in a Whitehall intelligence department, she has been a high-ranking mole, a KGB colonel no less. Exposed, she leaves in a hurry for East Germany, failing in a last-minute attempt to take her (or his) two children with her.

The second volume opens – unsurprisingly – in Mexico City, whither Samson and his boss Dicky Cruyer have come to investigate the sighting of a KGB major, last seen interrogating Samson in Berlin. As before, Deighton projects the view of an intelligence service whose members (with the exception of Samson) are more involved in the power struggle within the system than the one outside. Cruyer has "taken a PhD in office politics"; he might be "a little slow on languages and fieldwork,

but in the game of office politics he was seeded number one." The slipshod, meaningless nature of the second image (players are seeded at Wimbledon, not in tennis) reflects the generally tired and flaccid narrative tone of the opening episodes, with local colour as thick as guacamole.

Gradually things improve. When Samson's sister-in-law tells him not to "start all that working-class-boy-makes-good stuff", she's mocking an obsession of Deighton's earlier books; and once the intrigue reaches Berlin, the story is up and running with all the old verve and energy. Using treachery to split the Samson family was a stroke of genius, for it enables Deighton to see the conflict between two intelligence services as one between separated man and wife, heightened by their intimate knowledge of one another, and sharpened by their struggle for the children. At the same time there's something inescapably comic and implausible about the transformation of the rich and beautiful, Sloane Rangerish Fiona (née Kimber-Hutchinson) into a Rosa Klebb lookalike. It will be interesting to see whether Deighton's got anything up his sleeve to counter this in the third part of the trilogy, presumably to be entitled *London Match*.

Desert island deaths

Toby Fitton

FRED UHLMAN
Beneath the Lightning and the Moon
 107pp. Duckworth. £7.95.
 01256 1936 5

No novel by the author of *Reunion* should be ignored, even when it is as apparently slight as this volume, in which some seventeen of the 107 pages are blank. The brevity of *Beneath the Lightning and the Moon* is its undoing, as the author fails to allow himself sufficient space to investigate all the ramifications – particularly the psychological aspects – of his simple plot, in the detail they deserve.

Four very varied English victims of an air crash are stranded on a desert island in the Pacific, and await rescue initially with sangfroid but soon with little inner conviction of safety. They include a London cultural personage of implausibly varied attainment – museum official, Etruscan archaeologist, Fellow of All Souls and Companion of Honour – whose recent appearance on "Desert Island Discs" has all too soon come home to roost. There's a pretty teenager with enough simple nursery faith to keep her fairly resilient in spirit, and a

Wheeling and dealing

Brian McCabe

JOHN BURROWES
Jamessie's People: A Gorbals story
 271pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £9.95.
 0906391717

Like Johnnie Stark, the Razor King of *No Mean City*, the famous novel of pre-war Glasgow life, the hero of *Jamessie's People* is another – legend in his own lifetime – "hard man" of the pre-war Gorbals. Jamessie displays all the traits we have come to recognize in the archetype: he is fearless, vicious and intent on acts of territorial violence which will maintain his reputation; and his prowess. He also contains the classic flaw of the hard man – a soft centre – and is murdered on the way to buy a present for one of his illegitimate children when he should really have been at home stropping his razors.

Dismissing the "brown-shawled housewives" who shout their protestations from the sidelines as the men carve each other up, Jamessie is also a hit with the women: "She had suffered but never complained, on the nights when he had stayed away from home. She knew he was lying with other women. That was Jamessie; her husband and his way – virile and dominant and she would have him no other way."

Jamessie's death occurs at the beginning of the novel, but in an odd way he remains the

thrusting tycoon whose fragile financial empire will collapse like a card house in his absence. The quartet is made up by a Borstal-boy brute, isolated, contemptuous and uncooperative, who provides a menacing presence to the cultured metropolitan sophistication of his companions, but is eventually shown to be responsive when himself treated with the brutality he knows so well. Until the end this ill-assorted group subsists on technicolor fish, primitively caught and cooked, as hopes of rescue gradually evaporate.

The roles are very obviously defined: God and Mammon, culture and anarchy, beauty and the beast, in various combinations. Their interplay as morale crumbles and nature shows herself red in tooth and claw makes up the bulk of the story. As one would expect from Mr Uhlman, this is all handled with subtlety, and the grim conclusion is well managed as three of the four characters die off after months of tension, hallucination, scurvy, and disintegration. The survivor is the girl – Mr Uhlman could not have found it in his heart to kill her off too – and for this we must be grateful, but it was surely far too easy to dismiss her, after such horrifying experiences, with an all too convenient general amnesia and an irrelevant happy-ever-after ending.

central character, since Burrowes goes on to trace the lives of those who inherit his notoriety: his widow, his daughter, his brother Sammy and, of course, his murderer. It is Sammy's story – his progress from small-time black-marketeer to "legit" businessman – which yields the most insight into the world of the Gorbals. His progress involves illegal practices such as the making and marketing of bootleg whisky during the war, and the use of a "man of straw", or decoy landlord, to rent out tenement properties and avoid maintaining them. Each stage in his wheeling and dealing rise to respectability is charted with a keen eye for historical accuracy.

At times this desire to be thorough undermines the novel's essential readability, however. A character can't have a smoke without the author telling us that it was a Woodbine; "Five centre" and is murdered on the way to buy a present for one of his illegitimate children when he should really have been at home stropping his razors. The characters also suffer from their historical accuracy, although one senses that they are based on real individuals (the jacket-blurb calls the book a "novelization") and are plausible enough in their dress and manner, when Burrowes attempts to go deeper and examine their motives and desires they become more approximations to real people. In this and many other respects *Jamessie's People*, a first novel, is clearly the work of a journalist, and will appeal most to readers who like a slice of fact with their fiction.

The state of peonage

John Melmoth

B. TRAVEN
The Rebellion of the Hanged
 248pp. Allison and Busby £7.95 (paperback, £2.95).
 085031 4445

It has only recently become clear that, in spite of his hostility to a cult of personality, B. Traven's life was as eventful as his novels. Born Traven Torsen in Chicago about 1890, he ran away to sea at the age of ten. Between 1913 and 1919 he moved in German revolutionary circles and briefly exercised political power in the Bavarian Socialist Republic of 1918–1919. He was sentenced to death but managed to escape, wandered the world as a stateless person and worked as a "Wobbly" for the International Workers of the World in the United States and Mexico before jumping ship from a tramp Norwegian freighter and taking up residence in Tamaulipas.

Mexico and the conditions of peonage provided him with the material for a spate of revolutionary novels and short stories. His utopian but unsentimental anarchism (often likened to Thoreau's) is a contribution to proletarian literature entirely different in kind from the glum Stalinist realism of his Eastern European contemporaries. It is not surprising that, with the exception of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, his books have been more admired by German and Spanish speakers than by his fellow Americans. He died in 1969.

The six "jungle novels" written during the 1920s and 1930s – *Government*, *The Carcass*, *March to the Monteria*, *Trozas*, *The Rebellion of the Hanged* and *The General from the Jungle* – chronicle the events leading up to the 1911 Mexican revolution. This was an event made inevitable by the enslavement of the peons who were systematically cheated, taxed and butchered by extensive and entirely corrupt military and civil hierarchies of *federates* and *jefe*

politicos. The reign of Porfirio Diaz (1876–1911) was a grotesque contrast of good public relations abroad (an image of industrial and technological expansionism) and a murderous cynicism in matters of domestic government. It is estimated that during these years one half of the population of rural Mexico was snared by a vicious debt slavery. Thousands of others languished in an archipelago of prisons from Vera Cruz to Yucatan, Talsco and Jelisco.

The Rebellion of the Hanged takes place in one of the infamous *monterias* or lumber camps, a Flanders of mud and suffering in which indentured peons cut impossible amounts of timber in conditions of absolute deprivation. They are brutally punished for the least transgression and are hanged from the trees at night when beatings no longer have any effect. The novel focuses on the representative torments of Candido: his wife dies of peritonitis when the doctor refuses to operate without prior payment, one son drowns because of a foreman's indifference, his sister is attacked, he and his remaining son are physically mutilated. Throughout Mexico similar events are accreting to an enormous total of misery. Eventually, beaten into a fixity of revolutionary purpose, the peasants will have no more of it and break into open rebellion. Selflessly, co-operatively and unflinchingly they carve up their tormentors and march on the capital.

That Traven wrote with verve and fluency, that his accounts of peon life and of the jungle are mesmerizing: is almost beside the point. Everything that he wrote was subordinated to a political purpose, to making it impossible for the reader to evade historical responsibility. The Indians endured such conditions because Europe demanded cheap furniture, because bankers and industrialists required mahogany writing desks. In *Government*, Traven maintains, "You cannot have cheap mahogany and at the same time save all those innocent victims who perish by the thousand in the jungle to get it for you."



Akhenaten The Heretic King Donald B. Redford

A striking portrait of Akhenaten, monotheistic worshipper of the sun and best-known Egyptian king next to Tutankhamen. Redford, the Director of the Akhenaten Temple Project, draws on new evidence from his own excavations to describe the kingly heretic of Imperial Egypt. \$36.00 (U.S.)

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John Binyon

Lawless tales

Sarah Wintle

DAVID THOMSON
Roman and other stories
0333 365771
JOAN AIKEN
Fog Hounds, Wind Cat, Sea Mice
0333 365747
PARTAP SHARMA
The Little Master of the Elephant and other stories
0333 365755
Macmillan, £4.50 each.

In the fifth book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth makes an impassioned defence of "the dreamers" and "forgers of lawless tales" who, he imagined, had produced his favourite childhood reading: folk and fairy tales. "Jack the Giant Killer" and *Arabian Nights*. Such stories strengthen and expand childish minds and imaginations, counteracting the confining and mechanical effects of Enlightenment education. Wordsworth's language bears witness to the strong and occasionally disturbing energies of the genre, energies which have sometimes been lost in the stories' passage from oral folklore to child's reading. Fairy stories have often been prefabricated and bowdlerized (as a result) accused of being sexist and irrelevant to the needs of the urban child, or else regarded as therapeutic instruments, aids to coping with oedipal conflict, sibling rivalry and all the problems of the childish psyche.

David Thomson's *Roman* comprises retellings of four tales from Ireland, Mexico, North America and the Middle East, and illustrates splendidly the imaginative and literary potentialities of the form for children of about seven and over. These stories tell of "long, long ago in the days when all the animals knew how to speak" and the magical finding of water in the desert and the springing up of "the tamarind, the tamarisk, the fig, the pear, the persimmon

and the pomegranate". Each tale involves a relationship between a child and an alien animal world and so invokes fear as well as joy. In "Roman" and "Ahto" lost boys are brought up by seals or wolves and affinities with elemental forces of wind, water and forest are established.

It is, however, the two stories involving female heroines which approach most richly to dream and lawlessness, albeit in ways Wordsworth might have found strange. "Jo-at-ticil" relates how a girl, in return for help in obtaining honey to placate an ogre, marries a great brown bear with a horse-shoe mark on his forehead. Later during an isolated and lonely hibernation the girl herself metamorphoses into a bear and gives birth to three cubs. In the spring Jo-at-ticil, her bear husband, and the three cubs are shot dead, one by one, by the ogre with his painful hissing arrows, a scene prefabricated earlier in the narrative when the girl apprehensively contemplates an enormous earthenware jar decorated with scenes of bear-hunting. Death releases them from the spell. Jo-at-ticil's bear husband is an Aztec prince with a horse-shoe mark on his forehead. These stories touch on many layers of consciousness and yet their deep suggestiveness is suspended from a surface narrative of elegant simplicity. They are for reading aloud to an age group who may miss out on that experience, being considered too old.

The three stories of Joan Aiken's *Fog Hounds, Wind Cat, Sea Mice* would seem to be the author's own inventions, attempts at new fairy tales. This means that they don't have quite that shivery sense of over-determination which the authentic fairy tale has, but they are good stories none the less, with formal as well as substantive and atmospheric satisfactions. All three stories, like those of *Roman*, show children confronting their destiny, which is supernaturally discovered in the course of the action. But the animals in these cases come from the world of magic rather than the world

of nature. Tad in the first story has a sister, Ermina, who can "read people's futures in tea-leaves or apple-peelings or duck-feathers", but oddly these signs never tell her anything about her brother. It is only when the demonic Doubleman, who is being chased by the old King's ghostly crime squad, the fog hounds, gives Tad a golden sprig of mint that we and Ermina learn that Tad's destiny is to be the new King. The story is well paced and has moments of mysterious and anticipatory illumination as when a fog hound puppy licks the boy or the golden sprig bursts into flower in Tad's hand.

"In India the elephant has always signified wisdom" we are told at the beginning of Partap Sharma's collection of four stories about the boy Chintu and his elephant Vivek. The wisdom though, being Eastern, is paradoxical and riddling, beyond normative or positive law, if not exactly lawless. In one story, for example, Chintu, with the elephant's help, discovers water during a drought. In hurrying back to take a bucket to his bedridden uncle Chintu both manages to acquire a servant – a real folk tale servant, simultaneously humble and wholly in command – and also gives away to an odd assortment of people and animals all but a cupful of the water which is drunk by the cat before Chintu can give it to his uncle.

Yet it turns out that the elephant has by accident made a channel for the newly discovered water, and that the people and animals to whom Chintu gave a drink comprise cook, servant and livestock for the newly irrigated land. Uncle has what is apparently the last word: "I cursed Chintu thinking it was all folly. But little did I know. Sometimes more good flows from a good deed than a man will ever know." However, as in all good fiction the narrative points to mysterious patterns beyond the simply moral. Chintu's good nature is graced not only by the oddly resonant energies of his new servant, but also by the felicitous luck of finding himself in what he and the reader discover to be a very good story.

Role reversals

Linda Taylor

JAMES RIORDAN
The Woman in the Moon and other tales of forgotten heroines
Illustrated by Angela Barrett
88pp. Hutchinson. £5.95.
009 1567602

James Riordan is a collector and re-teller of folk tales. In a self-confessed attempt to create a balance for the passive-beautiful-princess/heroic-handsome-prince plot, he has concentrated in this collection on the kinds of heroines who are clever, strong (both physically and morally), wise, witty and courageous. In order to find thirteen like-minded tales, he has had to travel from Outer Mongolia, through Scandinavia and Europe, to a Red Indian tribe and the mountains of old Japan. (It is dispiriting to feel that the spaces between strong women are so large.)

Like a good many re-tellers before him, Riordan is not averse to changing the source to suit his purpose, as he does in the Lincolnshire story, "A Pottle o' Brains". In Jacobs's *English Fairy Tales*, the fool asks the woman, whom he is going to marry, whether she can cook, scrub and mend clothes. In Riordan's version, it is the woman who asks the fool these questions: according to the fool's mother she is a somewhat dodgy kind of female who does men's work in the fields and thus needs a "wife" to look after her. It is a bourgeois feminist reversal which makes very little difference in its overall impact as there is still a powerful breadwinner and a willing slave.

While not all the male protagonists in these tales are fools, most of them are morally foolish. They have to be taught or punished. With the exception of the title story, where it is the woman's spirituality that counts, and "Gulnara the Tartar Warrior", which is a reversal of a more usual kind of male heroic tale, these tales, unlike the Cinderellas and the Snow Whites, are concerned with domestic realism rather than a romantic, sexual ideal. "A Mother's Yarn" is interesting in this respect for, although it follows a familiar romantic pattern (dead, good mother, bad stepmother and stepister, weak father manipulated against his daughter), there is no idealistic pay-off for the daughter. After enduring the wilderness, with only the voice of her good mother to support her, and making a comfortable life for herself, the girl gets her father back, who, chastened by his daughter's survival, gets rid of the bad women in his life and determines never to leave his daughter again. It is a neat domestic introversion where the daughter has become her father's wife, the father has become his daughter's husband.

The moral order of the stories concerns the setting up of a balanced domestic hearth; the psychological message involves the defeat or reform of dominance by a seemingly frail, but clever, child figure. In "Oona and the Giant Cuchulainn", for instance, Cuchulainn is so reduced in size by Oona's plan that, a tiny man, he has to run down the hill in fear of his life. In their moral and psychological modes, the stories should be extremely satisfying for pre-adolescent boys and girls alike. With their cumulative effects, repetitions, humour and exotic settings, they are vivid and well told, while the weird detailed calm of the illustrations adds to the air of accessible fantasy. But the preface is an annoying irrelevance. Its condescending, simplistic anti-sexism blunders the reader's appreciation of the stories by suggesting that they have a particular job of re-education to do. Riordan appears to miss the symbolism of fairy tales, their subconscious effect, to ignore the range of their subject matter and the fact that they are more likely to mirror social mores than create them.

The Faber Book of Animal Stories, edited by Johnny Morris (207pp. Faber. Paperback. £2.50. 0 571 13281 2), which was first published in 1978, has recently been reissued. Among the twenty stories it contains are works by Farley Mowat, Gerald Durrell, Rudyard Kipling, Saki, James Herriot and W. H. Hudson. Johnny Morris's introduction is a delightful

Cataloguing incunables

David McKitterick

After *ESTC*, *ISTC*. At the end of September an international group of librarians, bibliographers, historians and literary scholars met under the joint auspices of the British Library and the Warburg Institute to consider an *Incunable Short-Title Catalogue*. When complete, this will record all surviving editions of books and other items printed from movable types in Europe from the beginning of printing in the mid-fifteenth century to 1500, and list all known copies of each edition. At present no such list exists, and those interested in the period have to search a sometimes exhausting and misleading array of bibliographies and library catalogues in quest of their prey. The long-established catalogue of fifteenth-century printed books in the British Museum, *BMC*, the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* and Goff's *Incunabula in American Libraries: A third census* (1964) stand at the head of a series of bibliographies that, for all their long traditions, still do not provide overall coverage of the kind found, for example, for early English or American books – and such as the *Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue* (of which the first phase was reviewed in the *TLS*, September 4) will eventually provide for its field.

Inevitably, where so much remains to be done even in the simplest enumeration of editions, estimates of the final total in *ISTC* vary; but it is generally thought that the number of surviving incunables is likely to be over 26,000. So far some 18,000 are in the British Library *ISTC* database, accessible through Base-Line and already, therefore, constituting the most complete list extant of this material. Like *ESTC*, it is organized so as to provide not only an inventory of known copies, but also the means of searching through the whole of the record, whether for authors, editors, dates, printers, places of publication, or even words in titles.

ISTC is founded on Goff's census, a large – it contains 12,939 titles – and highly structured list which has proved to be ideal for conversion to machine-readable form. To this are being added records of other collections with printed catalogues such as the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale, of collections without full modern catalogues such as the National Library of Edinburgh and the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, other national union catalogues such as *Index Generale degli Incunabili*, covering Italian libraries, and major comprehensive bibliographies like those of Hain and his successors, besides the *Gesamtkatalog* (GW) itself. The published GW has as yet reached only letter F in providing the authoritative full record of each incunable edition. *ISTC*, deliberately restricting its information about each edition to what is essential for unmistakable identification, on the other hand, covers the entire alphabet. From the beginning the staff of *ISTC* under Dr Lotte Hellgans have received the warmest encouragement from Dr Ursula Altmann, editor of the *Gesamtkatalog* in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, East Berlin: *ISTC* will thus both index already existing full bibliographical descriptions in other, more detailed, compilations, and also provide a census of copies on a scale matched nowhere else – though as with any such information system the latter parts of compilation will proceed more slowly than the first. Besides these basic components, one of the most notable features of *ISTC* is the generous provision made for the inclusion of explanatory footnotes and references to relevant secondary literature.

The conference met to hear a progress report, and, secondly, to consider how *ISTC* might be improved in the light of demands likely to be made of it. It became clear that *ISTC* can only be, for the present at least, just a short-title catalogue. It complements other catalogues such as GW in its coverage, but it is not an alternative. Such features as full bibliographical collations (which can present sometimes crucial evidence about the way in which a book was envisaged, or about the order of editions) and full details of woodcut illustrations are inappropriate and, indeed, irrelevant given the resources at present available. More seriously, both the need of an emphasis has been laid on rarity, it was with

Barker, of the British Library, offered forcible reminders that in some respects the description of early printed books still lacks the necessary vocabulary. The simple designations of format (F°, 4°, 8° etc) reflect paper sizes most inadequately, and in many instances the way in which a book was printed and folded not at all. In the first twenty or so years of printing, every book was printed page by page, on presses that often did not resemble very closely the fully developed wooden press, complete with tympan and frisket, that became so familiar in the sixteenth century. Hundreds of early quartos were printed on half-sheets, in a process that probably reflected the small size of some early presses. Even in so fundamental a subject as type description, one of the very foundations of modern incunabular study, the principles established before the First World War emphasize differences more by measurement than by describing general families of designs: the work of the Hellgans on the types used by printers in the Low Countries, based on designs drawn partly from Italy, partly from the Rhine valley and partly from local handwriting conventions, has shown how rich and suggestive a topic for investigation this can be. Current systems for describing types distract attention from those responsible for them – the punchcutters – and also from the pattern of influence enjoyed by each design. Until such matters as these are described and analysed, the history of the printed book in the fifteenth century will be understood only most inadequately.

These general considerations apply equally to all copies of a given edition. Much importance was accorded at the conference, however, to particulars of individual copies: to the recording of provenances, bindings, illuminations, imperfections and even such very practical matters as the availability of copies known to be in public collections. Attention to these points could help in conservation of copies, in tracing missing ones and avoiding "ghosts" created by duplicate entries of the same copy in two locations as a result (for example) of an institution's selling its recorded copy. Covering not only institutional copies, but those in private hands and in the trade as well, could, in due participant's phrase, act like radar and, given an appropriately organized program coupled with constant supervision, provide information with comparable speed.

Other matters of a more particular kind present greater difficulties. Some catalogues, such as *BMC* (to a great extent) and *Oates* on Cambridge University Library (to a greater), provide information on earlier owners: not just the earliest or seemingly most important, but later and less well-known names as well. Not every-one, apparently, recognized either the implications of a full presentation of provenance information, or its difficulties. In an ideal world, the fullest possible conspectus of owners is acceptable. Highly desirable as it is that such provenances should be obtainable from the *ISTC* database, their ordering and searching in a large file that relies on contributors of varying skills and following differing conventions is by no means easy. Latin and vernacular forms of the same name, abbreviations of names elsewhere recorded in full, and different forms of name for the same man, are all unpredictable and so likely to be artificially separated. It was useful, in this context, to be reminded of *France's* *fichiers* maintained for manuscripts in France by the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, a source little known to incunabulists in the English-speaking world.

It was further pointed out that the make-up of *Sammelbände*, volumes containing more than one work, which often reflect in their composition the way a book was first marketed and the uses envisaged for it in the context of other books, should also, ideally, be recorded. As Felix de Marez Oyens observed, this kind of evidence is destroyed all too often in the interest of either library or book-selling economy. Bindings, too, call for attention as a full aid to unravelling of provenances and the history of the book trade; but while at one extreme it is possible simply to record the existence of a contemporary or early cover (as H. M. Adams did in many instances in his catalogue of sixteenth-century Continental books in Cambridge libraries), a host of other details are equally desirable. In a period where emphasis has been laid on rarity, it was with

marking that some of the most interesting books are those that are the most common, because only then is it possible to chart their dispersal, reception and absorption into the international market. For studies such as this, which with one or two exceptions (chiefly for later periods) remains curiously unfashionable, all aspects of provenance study are vital.

Success breeds expectations. Amid so many suggestions as to how *ISTC* could be developed, and the kind of information its various users would like to see, it had to be repeated that it is not intended to be a full bibliography in the sense of providing all possible textual, physical and decorative details. Equally important – just as for *ESTC* – are the goodwill and expertise of contributors. Provenance information can be extremely difficult to extract accurately, and the description of bindings is fraught with dangers. At some time in the future, given suitable adjustments to the program, it may be possible to begin to tackle these copy-particular questions seriously, in piecemeal fashion. Other, more basic, questions, such as the authorship of anonymous works or the establishing of the true canon of the author, may, again, be helped by the IRHT. To a limited extent, it is even possible to conduct subject searches, using a number of chosen terms likely to appear in titles, though the short-title principle would seem to be at odds with really extensive work of this kind; for the present, James Murphy of the University of California at Davis reported enthusiastically on his success in searching for works on rhetoric. Here, again, terminology poses its own problems.

Above all, two principal themes emerged. First, and despite the distinguished work of Haebler, and GW itself, there is still no adequate manual of bibliographical description for fifteenth-century printed books. Second, a very great deal of work remains to be done in interpreting the fifteenth-century book trade. Denys Hay in his opening address, Professor Ian Doyle, of the University of Durham, and others alluded to the need to establish the kinds of change brought about in the slow transition from manuscript to printed book. Professor Severin Corstae, of Cologne, drawing on that university's example, traced some of the puzzling connections between its curriculum and the printing press; Dr Altmann examined the circulation of a best seller, Cicero; Dr Eberhard König, of Berlin, explored the market for the Gutenberg Bible so far as it can be traced by the localization of decoration; and Dr Martin Lowry, of the University of Warwick, pointed out the ways in which books can be used in a manner sometimes forgotten – in diplomacy. The advent of *ISTC* into a field which is unavoidably complicated, and which still poses so many fundamental questions of both bibliographical and historical kinds, may prove to be the single most important stimulus to the study of the fifteenth-century book since the early years of this century. It has already set itself an energetic pace; but the pace of those who want to use it is quickening.

Il Bibliotecario: Rivista di biblioteconomia, bibliografia, e scienze is a new Italian quarterly, edited by a professor of the School of Librarianship in the University of Rome, which aims at keeping – or bringing – Italian librarians up to date with modern developments in their field. There are exceptionally awkward problems in the uniform application in Italy of sound librarianship practices. The inadequate funding of the national library service, the still lamentably frequent use of unqualified staff in local and private libraries, the vast size of Italy's written heritage, its dispersion in many once-important cultural and political centres, have created a critical situation, in which the Italian library structure is generally unable to keep pace with technological change, or so to fulfil the wider cultural role which this change could give it. In the last analysis, what is required is a political solution. Meanwhile, *Il Bibliotecario* faces up with honesty to the situation, offering, to judge from its first number, published in September, a mixture of theoretical and practical articles, including material translated from other languages, which deal with matters of immediate concern to practicing librarians.

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Wilson, David M. *Anglo-Saxon Art: From the seventh century to the Norman Conquest* 1448

Jean Starobinski is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University of Geneva, and not, as we mistakenly said last week, Professor of Comparative Literature.

Following the publication of *Preservation policies and conservation in British libraries: report of the Cambridge University Project* by Dr F. W. Ratcliffe (reviewed in the *TLS*, October 5), the British Library has announced the creation of a National Preservation Office. The report found a lack of preservation expertise in British libraries, and the purpose of the Office, which is to be located within the British Library's Preservation Service, is to promote the conservation of library collections in the United Kingdom. Further information may be obtained from The Director, The Preservation Service, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB.

Fast and furious

John Mole

MARGARET MAHY
The Birthday Burglar and A Very Wicked Headmistress
Illustrated by Margaret Chamberlain
144pp. Dent. £5.95.
0 450 061 58 5

The lollipopery of its colourful dust-jacket of balloons and birthday presents is the perfect advertisement for this pair of narratives. *The Birthday Burglar* and *A Very Wicked Headmistress* are ideal for reading aloud since they delight in language and squeeze the last drop of nonsense from a succession of ludicrous situations. Their appeal is that of a blithe, inventive silliness, a whimsical surrealism which keeps up a headlong rush through its short chapters. *Crackerjack* jokes rub shoulders with woddly wisdom – "Could it be that money does not buy happiness?" – and sophisticated observations with awful puns. Margaret Mahy delights in the rough-and-tumble of her imagination, appearing to make it all up as she goes along, with a natural instinct for provoking laughter: a dog, with a hearing aid, the headmistress's brother inside his gorilla suit, thinking "This sort of thing never happens to real gorillas. If I get out of this alive, I'll stay a gorilla until the end of my days."

The plots are, above all, the occasions for performance. Each story has a protagonist who provokes a kind of innocent mayhem. Bassington, a bored young fauntleroy abandoned by his parents and consumed by his own languor, realizes that he has never had a birthday and, with the help of his butler, Baker, goes about stealing other people's and boarding them on his private island. Still bored, he contemplates the theft of Christmas, but Baker here draws the line.

"Steal Christmas?" cried Baker. It wasn't. "Oh, we wouldn't do that surely. Where would we put it? We're almost full up with these birthdays for one thing, and for another, Christmas is the big time. Christmas is people would go, isn't it? Look Christmas."

One of the stolen birthdays belongs to a ninety-nine-year-old Mrs Herringbone who is damned

if she'll be deprived of her hundredth and who, it turns out, was once Baker's fancy. After sixty or so pages of frenzied alliteration, it is revealed that Bassington's real addiction is not to burglary except inasmuch as it is a symptom of his family's addiction to the letter B. The birthdays are returned to their owners, Bassington (as we might have guessed he would) becomes a bee-keeper, and Mrs Herringbone marries Baker.

As so on to Tatiana Taffeta, erstwhile cheat, blackmailer and Human Canonball, who runs

Getting going

Katherine Duncan-Jones

ANNABEL FARJEON
The Lucky Ones
Illustrated by Gareth Floyd
94pp. Kays and Ward. £5.95.
07182 12908

Life is hard for everyone in Annabel Farjeon's *The Lucky Ones*. It is set in an indistinct period of the early twentieth century in Walling End, a fishing village most of which has been engulfed by the sea. East Anglia comes vaguely to mind, but since the Norwegian coast is across the sea, Northumberland is more likely. I cannot penetrate the clues to regional speech offered by such lines as "Daisy's a real strong matri and it's only a wee church" or "Just let me get my hands under your scabby armpits". There are four characters, two baddies, two goodies. Len and Jimmy, distinguished from each other by the fact that Jimmy is fat and "had a high sweet voice", are twelve-year-old lownees who come to vandalize the deserted cottages. Curly-headed Tom and his fisherman grandfather Old Thomas are the last remaining inhabitants of Walling End, and their poverty-stricken cottage is stripped of its few possessions by the pious Len and Jimmy. The resourceful foil of Tom and Thomas, who mend their boat with old nails and sleep under it when the spring tides threaten, is contrasted

with the greed and stupidity of Len and Jimmy, who make a return visit to Walling End to take lead from the church roof. Ignorant of tides, they get marooned in the bell tower, while the horse they have left tethered below is saved in the nick of time by Tom and his grandfather. However, we are not allowed to be too self-righteous about Len and Jimmy; when Tom, seeing them floating out to sea on an upturned table, says "Serve them right . . . They're thieves", his grandfather corrects him: "We're all thieves one way or another. You and I steal fishes from the sea." They do what they can to rescue them.

This is a thoughtful and atmospheric book, interesting in detail and pleasingly unself-indulgent in its ending. It is, however, rather overwritten, and I suspect many child readers may founder in the opening pages. It is not clear for what age group the story is intended. Indeed, its presentation is altogether rather enigmatic – but I fear many modern ten-year-olds may be impatient at having to read four pages of description before any characters emerge. At times too, the vocabulary is confusingly archaic: when "Len and Jimmy were jogging home to Beckett" no very child reader will realize that it is the pony, not the boys, who is taking exercise. Miss Farjeon's style is compellingly nostalgic, like that of her aunt, a housewife and a blundering off-balance. The story when it gets going is most exciting.

The Faber Book of Animal Stories, edited by Johnny Morris (207pp. Faber. Paperback. £2.50. 0 571 13281 2), which was first published in 1978, has recently been reissued. Among the twenty stories it contains are works by Farley Mowat, Gerald Durrell, Rudyard Kipling, Saki, James Herriot and W. H. Hudson. Johnny Morris's introduction is a delightful

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John Mole